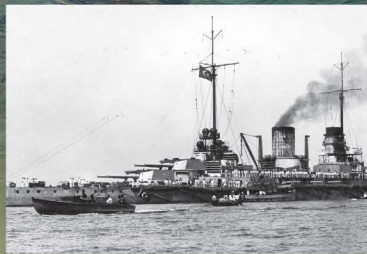


OTTOMAN NAVY WARSHIPS 1914-18

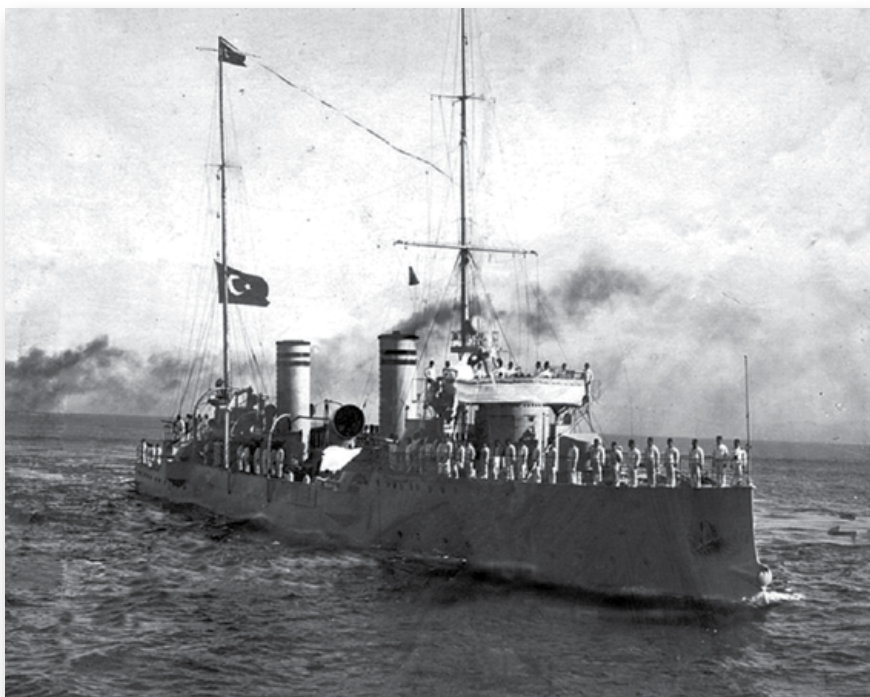


RYAN K. NOPPEN

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL WRIGHT

NEW VANGUARD 227

OTTOMAN NAVY WARSHIPS 1914-18



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OTTOMAN WARSHIPS 1914–18

INTRODUCTION

The warships that made up the Ottoman fleet in 1914 were products of a naval building program that was dictated by political intrigue and foreign debt, making the Ottoman Navy unique among those of the great powers. Although the Ottoman Navy still ranked as the world's third largest as late as 1876, it had rapidly deteriorated into a motley collection of old, rusting armored ships kept at anchor and left unmaintained due to intentional neglect by the despotic Sultan Abdülhamid II, who feared reformist tendencies prevalent throughout the naval officer corps. A rising Greek naval presence in the Aegean towards the beginning of the 20th century finally forced the sultan to begin a limited naval modernization program. However, his method of selecting warships to purchase had little to do with sound naval strategy but rather diplomacy. The Ottoman government owed compensation to a number of foreign governments for businesses destroyed and investments lost during a series of uprisings that raged across the Empire from 1894 to 1897. New naval contracts with the foreign nations in question could be used as official Ottoman compensation to these governments, and the Navy would have the modernization program it had long been petitioning for. This naval acquisition scheme was followed until the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and the overthrow of Abdülhamid II in 1909. Warship purchases were no longer dictated by foreign compensation payments, but the revolution had created a situation of political stalemate in the Ottoman government until a *coup d'état* by the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) movement in January 1913. Between 1908 and 1914 there were 12 grand viziers and 14 ministers of marine in the Ottoman government, which meant that there was little possibility of a consistent strategic naval program prior to World War I.

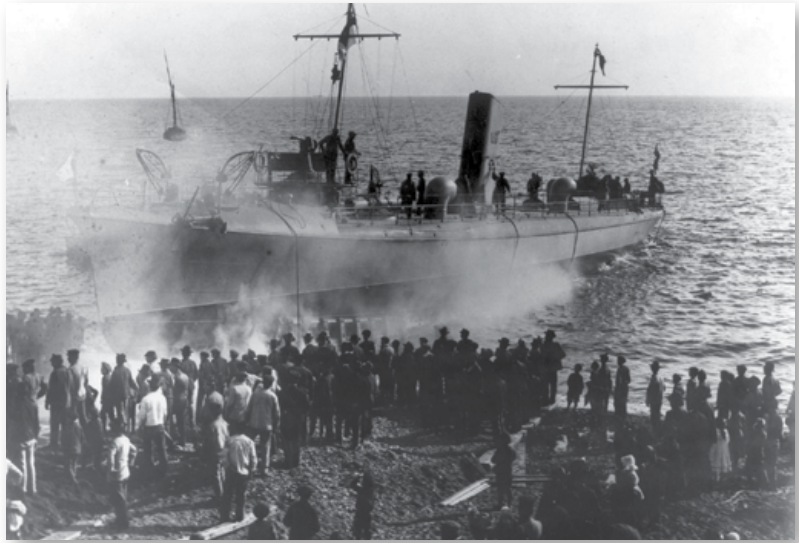
The central battery ironclad *Mesûdiye* as originally completed in 1874 (left) and following her 1903 reconstruction by Ansaldo (right). *Mesûdiye* represented the obsolete fleet maintained by Sultan Abdülhamid II throughout much of his reign and his later haphazard naval modernization programs.



The humiliating Ottoman defeats in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 and the First Balkan War of 1912–13 and poor performance of the small Ottoman fleet compelled the new Ottoman leadership to embark on naval expansion of some manner. The old “Sick Man of Europe” was a pariah state on the Continent, surrounded by hostile naval powers all eager to see its dismemberment and, with over 11,000 miles of coastline to protect, the defensive necessity of a modern fleet had become all

too painfully clear. It was against this diplomatic backdrop that the Young Turk governments desperately sought to modernize the Ottoman Navy and create a modern battle fleet, centered around dreadnought battleships, that would reestablish the Empire as a potent regional naval power. Unexpectedly, however, the course of this brief Ottoman naval resurgence from 1909 to 1914 played a major role of bringing the Empire into World War I; unfortunately the dreadnoughts that were the centerpiece of this resurgence saw no action under the Ottoman ensign and the fleet had to persist with the hodge-podge of vessels acquired by Abdülhamid II and the early purchases of the Young Turk governments.

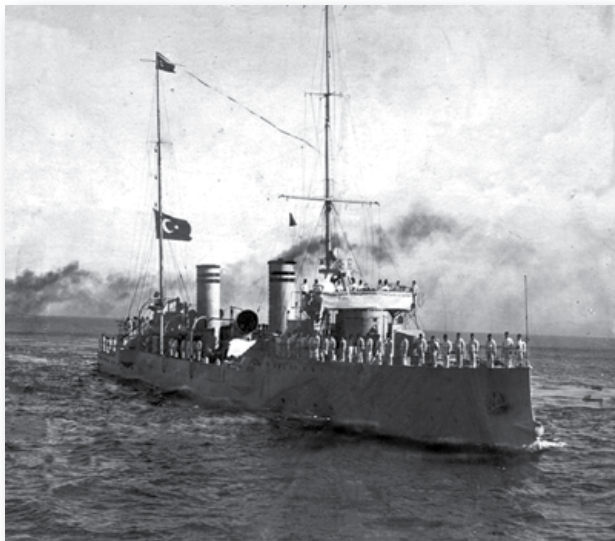
This work will provide a concise overview of the primary warships that played active roles in the conflict that finally resulted in the death of the old “Sick Man of Europe.”



Launching of the torpedo boat *Ankara* in 1904 at the Ansaldo yard in Genoa. While modern at the time of purchase, the Akhisar/Antalya class torpedo boats were worn out and obsolete by 1914 but due to a lack of modern warships they were used as convoy escorts, submarine hunters, and ersatz minesweepers.

SHIPS OF THE OTTOMAN NAVY

Abdülhamid II's contract-as-compensation naval modernization program sounded good in theory but it did not necessarily create an effective long-term modernization and fleet expansion strategy. The first project of this program was the modernization of the old central battery ironclad *Mesûdiye* (originally built by the Thames Iron Works in Britain in 1875 and armed with sixteen 10in muzzle loading guns) by the Ansaldo yard in Genoa beginning in 1899. In 1903 she emerged from her reconstruction resembling an armored cruiser with primary turrets fore and aft and a large superstructure amidships; nevertheless, she was still an old ship lacking modern torpedo protection, and the relatively low cost of her modernization was more appealing to Abdülhamid II than the acquisition of a new battleship. Nine Akhisar/Antalya class torpedo boats were also purchased from Ansaldo to round off the Empire's compensation payments to Italy, but by 1914 both *Mesûdiye* and these torpedo boats had little combat value. The former was briefly used as a floating battery in the Dardanelles (her intended primary armament of two Vickers 240mm/45 BL guns were never mounted) while the remaining



One of the Peyk-i Şevket class torpedo cruisers. These obsolete vessels spent much of the war on the sidelines as *Berk-i Satvet* was damaged by a mine in January 1915 and *Peyk-i Şevket* was damaged by a torpedo from the British submarine *E11* in August 1915.

units of the latter served as anti-submarine patrol vessels and ersatz minesweepers during World War I. Another questionable contract-as-compensation scheme was the modernization of the ironclad *Âsâr-ı Tevfik* (launched in France in 1868) and purchase of two new torpedo cruisers from the Krupp Germania Werft yard in Kiel. The modernized *Âsâr-ı Tevfik* proved to be even less useful than the modernized *Mesûdiye*, and the torpedo cruisers, named *Berk-i Satvet* and *Peyk-i Şevket*, with their ram bows were a throwback to the torpedo gunboats of the late 19th century. The idea of the torpedo cruiser was that of a small cruiser designed to hunt torpedo boats, a predecessor to the destroyer concept, but this type of warship was quickly discarded by most navies as

these ships were usually significantly slower than their intended prey. *Âsâr-ı Tevfik* was wrecked in February 1913 after running aground. *Berk-i Satvet* and *Peyk-i Şevket*, obsolete when they were commissioned and only able to steam at 18 knots in 1914, saw very limited service as convoy escorts during the war. In the case of the above listed warships, their contracts may have been diplomatically beneficial for Abdülhamid II's government but they were a waste of funds regarding their potential usefulness in the Ottoman fleet.

Some warships acquired by Abdülhamid II's contract-as-compensation program proved to be modern and useful units that saw service in World War I. One of these was the protected cruiser *Hamidiye* (originally named *Abdülhamid II*), ordered from Armstrong Whitworth & Co. in Newcastle upon Tyne in the spring of 1900. Great Britain was another nation owed money due to the late 19th century uprisings (for the technical specifications of *Hamidiye*, see Plate A). *Hamidiye* was originally part of a modernization plan developed by Ottoman admirals in 1897 that envisioned the modernization of several old ironclads and the acquisition of two new battleships, two armored cruisers, two protected cruisers, and two light cruisers. The modernized *Mesûdiye*, *Âsâr-ı Tevfik*, a few other reconstructed older vessels, and *Hamidiye* were the only ships of this plan that Abdülhamid II approved funding for with the exception of a second protected cruiser.

This ship, *Mecidiye* (originally named *Abdûlmecid I*), was ordered from the Philadelphia yard of William Cramp & Sons in the spring of 1900. The United States government demanded financial compensation for American businesses destroyed in the uprisings but initially the sultan stubbornly refused any payment to this "upstart" power. It was only after the United States government, fresh off its heels from its victory over Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898, threatened to send a naval task force to Constantinople to collect payment under its guns that Abdülhamid II acted. After much haggling in price, the sultan offered compensation in the form of placing an order for a near-sister of the British-built *Hamidiye* in an American yard. *Mecidiye* was laid down in November 1901, launched in July 1903, and commissioned in Constantinople in December 1903. Despite it being relatively modern, *Mecidiye*'s operations at sea were hindered by a critical

design flaw; the boilers were positioned too close to the centerline and this resulted in heavy rolling at sea, particularly with full coal bunkers. These stability problems were never fully corrected, and as a result *Mecidiye* saw only a fraction of the service that her near-sister *Hamidiye* did. Despite *Mecidiye*'s flaws, she and *Hamidiye* were competitive units compared to their foreign equivalents and were not completely outclassed at the beginning of World War I, an advantage by Ottoman standards.

The last major warships acquired for the Ottoman Navy during the reign of Abdülhamid II were “diplomatic” purchases from French munitions manufacturers. The Ottoman

government believed it wise to spread out its foreign military purchases in order not to isolate itself from any of the Great Powers. Concerned that France might consider the Ottoman Army's recent large orders of artillery pieces from Krupp as a sign of favoritism towards Germany, the Ottoman government ordered four new torpedo boats from Schneider & Cie of Chalon-sur-Saône in 1906. The boats were of the Torpilleur Type 38 M class, 75 of which were built for the French Navy, but were referred to as the *Demirhisar* class in the Ottoman Navy (for the technical specifications of *Demirhisar* class torpedo boats, see Plate E). Having met his diplomatic goals through the completion of his contract-as-compensation naval purchasing program, it would have been unlikely that Abdülhamid II would have provided funding for any further naval expansion.

Nevertheless, events across the Aegean forced the sultan to authorize further purchases for his admirals. While the negotiations over the purchase of the *Demirhisar* class boats were taking place, the Greek government purchased four modern destroyers from the AG Vulcan yard of Stettin and four from Yarrow & Co. of London. The Greek defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 had not quenched popular support for territorial expansion, and led to a series of military and naval purchasing programs in the first



The British-built protected cruiser *Hamidiye*.

***Mecidiye* Specifications**

Dimensions	length: 330ft; beam: 42ft; draft: 17ft 6in
Displacement	3,300 tons
Ship's Complement	15 Germans, 340 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	two 6in L/45 QF guns; eight 4.7in L/45 QF guns; six 3-pdr QF and six 1-pdr QF guns; two 457mm torpedo tubes
Machinery	two vertical quadruple expansion engines, coal-fired by 16 Niclausse water tube boilers, producing up to 12,500 IHP and turning two screws at a maximum speed of 22kt (18kt by 1914)
Protection	internal sloped armored deck: 4in; horizontal upper armored deck: 1.5in

The American-built protected cruiser *Mecidiye*. Her stability problems are evident in her slight list to port in this photograph.



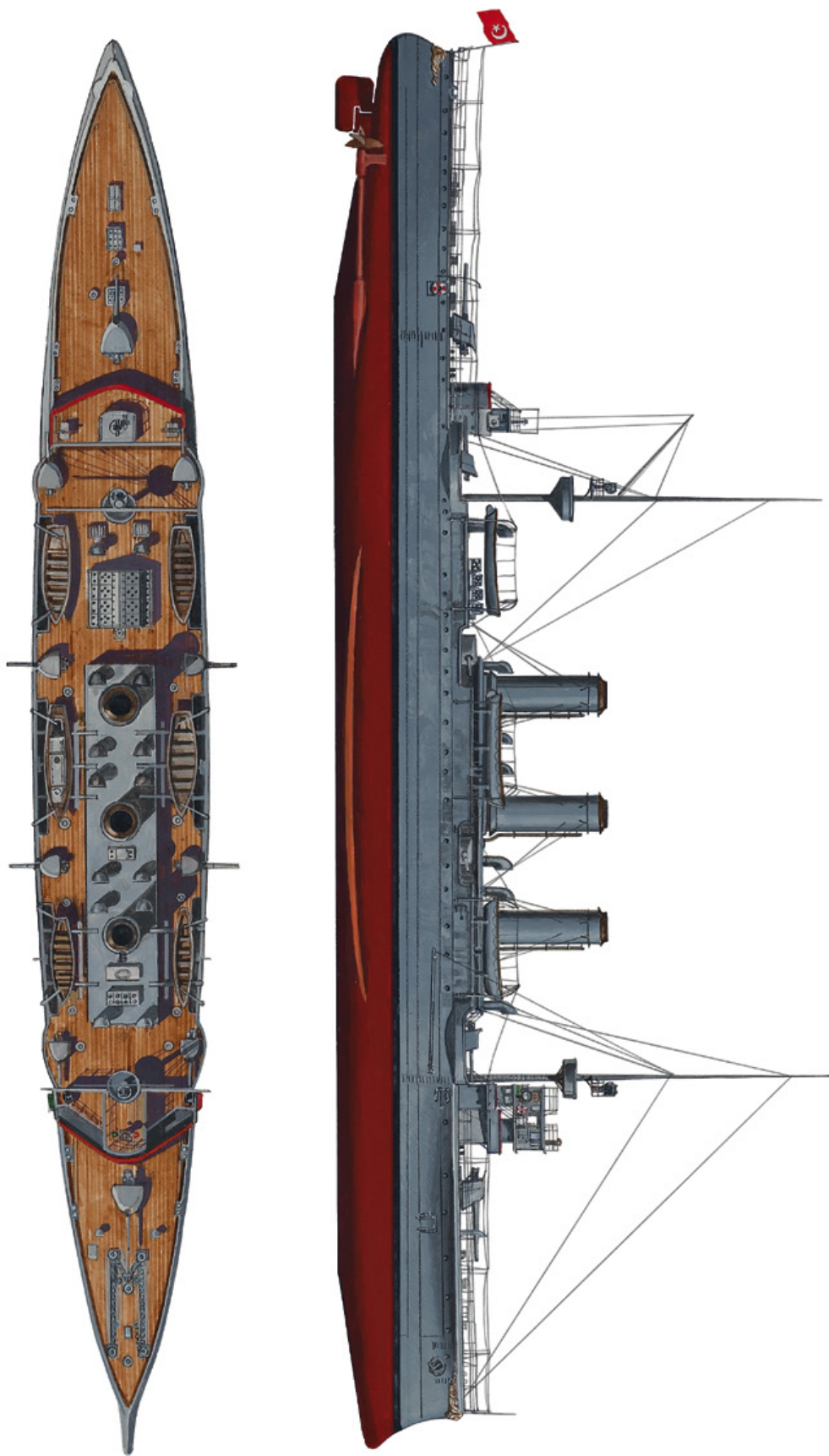
decade of the 20th century. These German- and British-built destroyers, with displacements of 350 tons, top speeds of 30 knots, and multiple 76mm and 57mm guns completely outclassed all of the Ottomans’ recently acquired torpedo boats. Schneider took full advantage of this situation, highlighting that the Greek destroyer purchases were from German and British yards, and successfully convinced the Ottoman government that its fleet would need modern destroyers as well. The French firm offered to arrange the construction

Hamidiye Specifications	
Dimensions	length: 103.6m; beam: 14.5m; draft: 4.9m
Displacement	3,830 tons
Ship's Complement	15 Germans, 340 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	two 6in/45 QF guns (replaced with two 150mm SK L/45 QF guns in 1915); eight 4.7in/50 QF guns; six 3-pdr and six 1-pdr QF guns; two 450mm torpedo tubes in trainable launchers on each side of the bridge
Machinery	two vertical triple expansion engines, coal-fired by 16 Niclausse water-tube boilers, producing up to 12,500 IHP and turning two screws at a maximum speed of 22 knots (16 knots by 1914)
Protection	internal sloped armored deck: 4in; horizontal upper armored deck: 1.5in

A

HAMIDIYE

Hamidiye was laid down in the Elswick yard of Armstrong Whitworth in April 1902, launched on September 25, 1903, and commissioned on April 27, 1904. She was typical of British protected cruisers of the time and was the first useful modern unit acquired by the Ottoman Navy in the 20th century. *Hamidiye* and her dynamic commander, Captain Rauf Orbay, gained international attention during the First Balkan War when they undertook a four-month raid throughout the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Red Seas, bombarding Greek and Serbian ground installations and sinking seven Greek merchantmen. *Hamidiye* was a relatively well-maintained warship but age and heavy use had taken its toll on her machinery and by fall 1914 she could make only 16 knots. Nevertheless, she served as an effective convoy escort, sailing alongside *Yavuz* and *Midilli* during the early months of the war until her low speed made her too vulnerable to the new Russian destroyers and dreadnoughts entering service in 1915. She was brought back into service in the spring of 1918, after a lengthy refit, and conducted several operations with *Yavuz* along the Russian coast.





One of the Demirhisar class torpedo boats after being launched at the yard of Schneider & Cie at Chalon-sur-Saône.

of four units of an updated version of the Durandal class, the first class of destroyers built for the French Navy. The Ottoman government agreed to this offer and ordered the four ships of the Samsun class in 1906. *Samsun*, *Basra*, and *Yarhisar* were laid down and completed by SA Chantier et Ateliers de la Gironde of Bordeaux in 1907; *Taşoz* was laid down and completed by Schneider & Cie of Nantes in the same year.

The fortunes of the Ottoman Navy appeared to improve following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, because one of the goals of the new

Young Turk government was to expand and reform the fleet, and in this pursuit it called upon the assistance of the British Royal Navy. Throughout the 19th century British naval missions had been employed to oversee the Ottoman Navy. The British saw the Young Turk Revolution as an opportunity to revitalize their influence in Ottoman naval affairs after the lethargic years of Abdülhamid II's reign, and sent a dynamic new naval mission under Vice Admiral Sir Douglas Gamble to Constantinople in February 1909. Gamble was welcomed by the new Ottoman government but was immediately dismayed by his task; Abdülhamid II's administration may have shown some initiative for purchasing new warships during the last years of his reign but there had been no investment in training or fleet exercises. Some of the recently acquired warships had never even left the Golden Horn. Gamble therefore focused all of his energies on new training programs for officers and sailors, but lack of funds and political instability within the new administration limited the results of his efforts. These problems were compounded by a dramatic shift in the Ottoman government's attitude towards naval reform due to developments in Greece.

In the autumn of 1909 the Ottomans learned that the Greeks were in negotiations with Cantiere navale fratelli Orlando of Livorno for the purchase of a modern 9,958 ton Pisa class armored cruiser. With a top speed of 22.5 knots and an armament of four 234mm and eight 190mm guns, this warship outmatched every vessel in the Ottoman fleet. The Ottoman government contacted Orlando with a counter-bid for the warship but was informed on November 30, 1909 that it had been sold to the Greeks. This new armored cruiser, named *Georgios Averof* and launched in March 1910, put Ottoman admirals and leaders into a panic. From this time on the Ottoman Navy became convinced that the only effective countermeasure to *Averof* would be large capital ships. The Ottoman government approached Vice Admiral Hugh Williams, who took over the British naval mission from Gamble in April 1910, and requested him to petition the Royal Navy or British yards for the purchase of existing or nearly completed pre-dreadnoughts or armored cruisers. Williams recommended that the Ottoman Navy should focus on a balanced fleet program, using limited funds to purchase cruisers and destroyers while continuing to focus on improved training and exercises. But the Young Turk government had become entranced

Samsun Class Specifications	
Dimensions	length: 184ft; beam: 20ft 8in; draft: 9ft 2in
Displacement	284 tons
Ship's Complement	17 Germans, 74 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	one 65mm L/50 and six 47mm L/50 QF guns; two 450mm torpedo tubes on trainable mounts on deck
Machinery	two vertical triple expansion engines, coal-fired by two Normand boilers, generating up to 5,950 IHP and turning two screws at 28 knots (17 knots by 1915)



One of the Samsun class destroyers.

with large capital ships and was not to be convinced otherwise. Williams reluctantly agreed to Ottoman demands for battleships and asked if the Royal Navy would be willing to sell the two pre-dreadnoughts of the Swiftsure class. With Great Britain locked in a naval arms race with Germany, however, the Royal Navy was unwilling to part with any potentially useful capital ship. All that it was willing to sell were two Royal Sovereign class pre-dreadnoughts that dated back to 1891, but Ottoman admirals insisted on ships that were more modern.

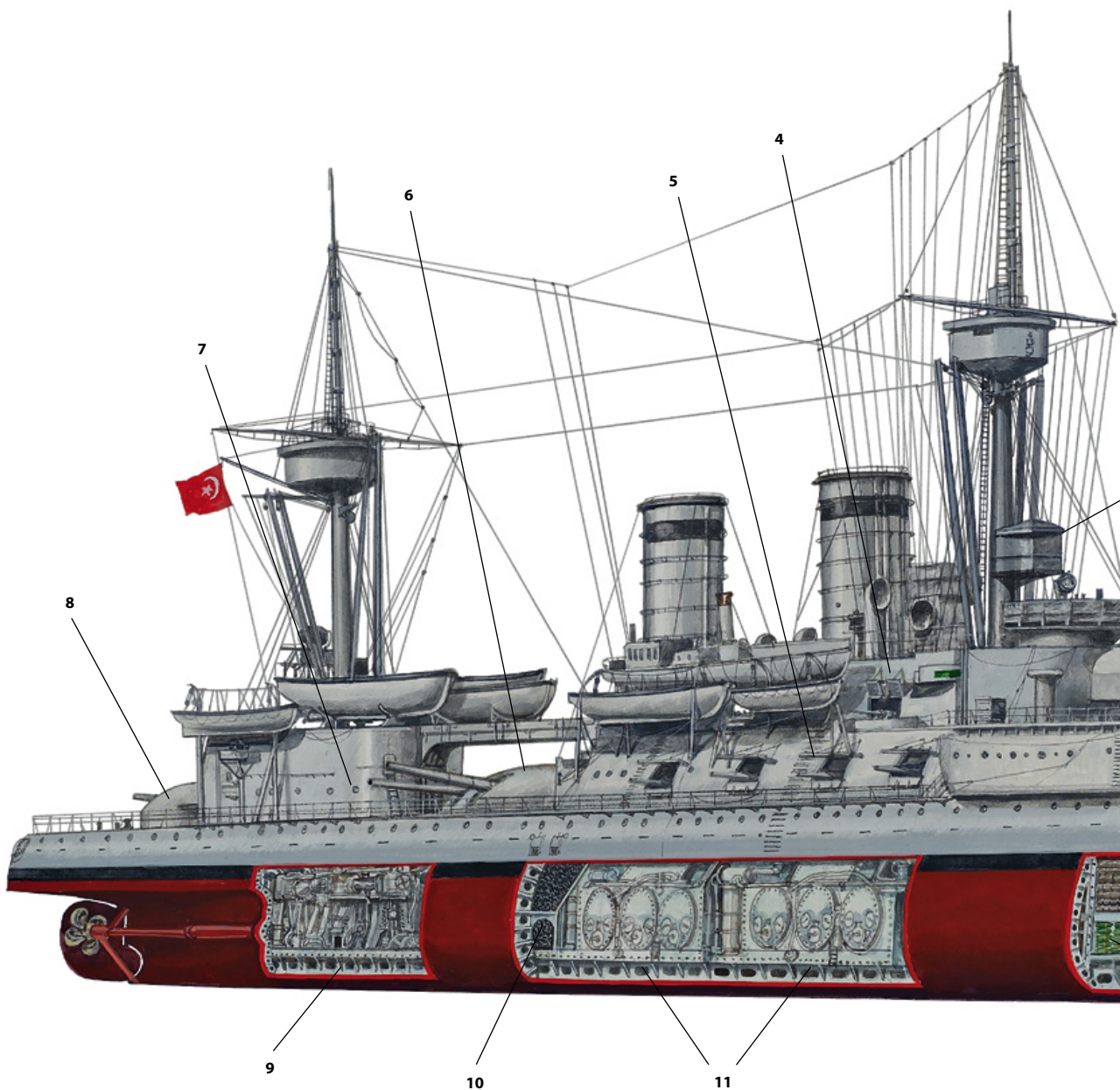
With construction proceeding on *Averof* and Admiral Williams unable to acquire adequate warships from the Royal Navy, the Ottoman Navy was becoming desperate for a warship or warships to match the Greek armored cruiser. Already in December 1909 Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha quietly approached the German military attaché in Constantinople to see if an armored cruiser could be acquired from German yards. The German Reichsmarineamt, or Imperial Naval Office, offered the recently commissioned armored cruiser *Blücher*; however, the Kaiser insisted that the purchasing price equal the cost of a new battlecruiser. The Ottoman government was interested in obtaining her but refused to consider the exorbitant price tag. It countered by offering to purchase the battlecruiser *Moltke*, then under construction, or her sister (known at the time as *Abgabe H*, later to be known as *Goeben* – ironically the Ottomans would later receive this ship for free) for the same price as *Blücher* but the Kaiserliche

Pre-dreadnought *Barbaros Hayreddin*, ex-German *Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm*. She and her sister were the first “modern” battleships of the Ottoman fleet.



The battleships of the Brandenburg class marked the transition from ironclad coastal-defense ships to ocean-going pre-dreadnought battleships in the Kaiserliche Marine. While innovative in 1890 and despite being modernized in 1904, *Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis* were well past their prime by 1914 and were hardly worth the amount paid by the Ottoman government in 1910. With a maximum speed of only 16.5 knots and lacking modern torpedo protection, they could not be risked in fleet actions and never ventured outside of the

Dardanelles during the war. They did, however, serve as useful floating batteries during the Dardanelles and Gallipoli Campaigns, as their 28cm Krupp primary guns had a range at 25° elevation of 15,000m. The usefulness of their primary batteries even went beyond World War I; in the mid-1930s the center and stern turrets were removed from *Torgut Reis* and mounted as fixed gun batteries on the Asian side of the Dardanelles where they can still be seen today.

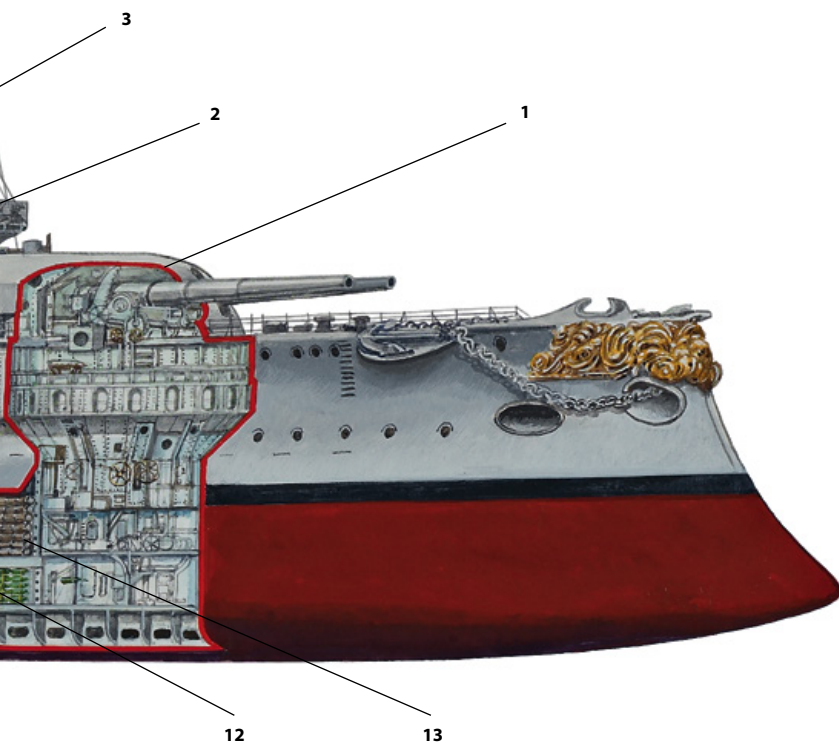


KEY

1. Forward primary turret with two 28cm SK L/40 guns
2. Bridge
3. Conning tower
4. 8.8cm SK L/35 QF gun battery
5. 10.5cm SK L/35 secondary battery
6. Amidships primary turret with two 28cm SK L/35 guns
7. Commander's quarters
8. Aft primary turret with two 28cm SK L/40 guns
9. Vertical triple expansion engines
10. Coal bunkers
11. Boilers
12. Forward 28cm ammunition storage
13. Forward powder magazine

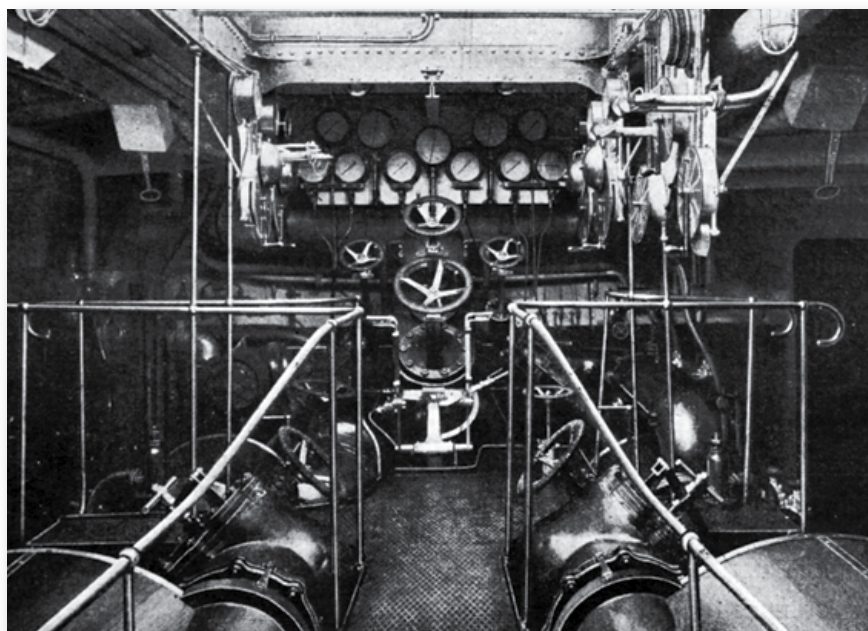
Barbaros Hayreddin Class Specifications (*Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis*)

Dimensions	length: 379ft 6in; beam: 64ft; draft: 26ft
Displacement	10,501 tons
Ship's Complement	568
Armament	four 28cm SK L/40 primary guns in twin turrets fore and aft, two 28cm SK L35 primary guns in the amidships turret; eight 10.5cm SK L/35 secondary guns in open casemates in the forward superstructure; eight 8.8cm SK L/35 QF guns, two in forward sponsons, two in the forward superstructure, and four in the aft superstructure; three 450mm torpedo tubes
Machinery	two triple expansion engines, coal-fired by 12 boilers, producing up to 10,200 IHP and driving two screws at a maximum speed of 16.5 knots
Protection	armored belt: 16in at the top center (tapering to 12in fore and aft) tapering to 7.9in at the bottom; conning tower: 12in; barbettes: 12in; cupola turrets: 2in on top tapering to 4.7in on the sides; armored deck: 2.4in.



Marine had no desire to wait for a replacement to be built. Furthermore, as the foreign naval mission in Constantinople and the Ottoman fleet was headed by a British admiral, the Reichsmarineamt did not want its latest naval technology to be examined by British officers. Finally on July 15 the Reichsmarineamt presented the Ottoman government with a new proposal for the immediate acquisition of capital ships. The Kaiserliche Marine was willing to sell the four units of the Brandenburg class of pre-dreadnoughts at a price roughly equal to that of *Blücher*. Although the Brandenburgs were laid down in 1890 (making them contemporaries of the *Royal Sovereigns* offered by the Royal Navy), they had been modernized only a few years before and, mounting six 280mm primary guns, they were more heavily armed as well as armored than the Greek *Averof*. On August 5 the Ottoman government agreed to purchase two of the Brandenburgs, *Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm* and *Weissenburg* (for the technical specifications of the Brandenburg class pre-dreadnoughts, see Plate B), renaming them *Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis*. This deal also included four destroyers (*S 165*, *S 166*, *S 167*, and *S 168*), recently built by the Schichau-Werke of Elbing, which the Reichsmarineamt had offered to the Ottoman government earlier in the year (for the technical specifications of the Muâvenet-i Milliye class destroyers, see Plate E). Part of the reason for the purchase of these pre-dreadnoughts and destroyers was a unique financing option offered by the Germans; the Deutsche Bank released the frozen assets of Abdülhamid II for the naval contract, which amounted to roughly half the total cost.

As with other aspiring nations with small navies, the Ottoman government came to believe that a small force of dreadnoughts could achieve regional supremacy against a maritime rival. To this effect in the summer of 1911 the government approached Admiral Williams, requesting assistance in acquiring a new dreadnought battleship. Williams reluctantly pursued the Ottoman government's desire for dreadnoughts. After the German coup in the sale of the Brandenburg pre-dreadnoughts and Schichau destroyers, the British



View of the engine room and turbines of an early German destroyer similar to those of the Muâvenet-i Milliye class. Ottoman inexperience with turbine propulsion meant that these vessels required thorough overhauls following the Ottoman alliance with Germany. Once properly handled and maintained, however, they became the best destroyers in the fleet.



foreign office (representing the interests of British shipyards) also pressured Williams to give in to the Ottomans, fearful they would turn to German yards if again denied by the British. In August 1911 the Ottoman government contracted with the Vickers armaments firm for a dreadnought, similar to those of the Iron Duke class. This ship, named *Reşadiye* and armed with ten 13.5in guns, would out-gun any ship in the Hellenic Navy, the Italian Regia Marina, or the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Rumors of Ottoman dreadnought acquisition spurred the Russians into designing and contracting the Imperatritsa Mariya class of dreadnoughts for the Black Sea Fleet in the summer of 1911; since the end of the Russo-Turkish War the Ottoman Navy had been a non-entity in the Black Sea and the Ottoman fleet's sudden rebirth came as an unpleasant surprise to the Czar's government. In addition, the panicked Greeks ordered a dreadnought from Germany's Vulcan yard the following year. The Ottomans had inadvertently kicked off a naval arms race in the Balkans, one which none of the regional powers could afford, but at the same time neither could they ignore it.

To offset the Russian and Greek building programs, in late 1913 the Ottomans purchased the Brazilian dreadnought *Rio de Janeiro* (a unique design mounting fourteen 12in guns), which its owners were eager to sell and which was nearing completion at Armstrong Whitworth. The Ottoman government had borrowed heavily, primarily from French banks, for the purchase of these ships and it was taking a large portion of the Empire's GDP to pay back the loans. The sudden purchase of *Rio de Janeiro*, now renamed *Sultan Osman I*, required more than just loans, however; the Empire was forced to raise taxes and garnish government wages. Additional funds were raised by the Ottoman Navy League (Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Millîye Cemiyeti), established in the spring of 1909 by the Young Turk government to further naval awareness throughout the Empire and to raise funds for new warship construction. The Ottoman Navy League began a popular subscription campaign that collected donations from school children for the purchase of *Reşadiye* and *Sultan Osman I*, making the warships a national initiative in more than just name.

LEFT Cover of a 1913 issue of *Donanma Mecmuası*, the publication of the Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Millîye Cemiyeti or Ottoman Navy League, showing the super-dreadnought *Sultan Osman I*. Donations to the Ottoman Navy League, largely from children, helped to purchase *Sultan Osman I* and *Reşadiye*.

RIGHT *Sultan Osman I* under construction at Armstrong Whitworth.

THE OTTOMAN NAVY AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR I

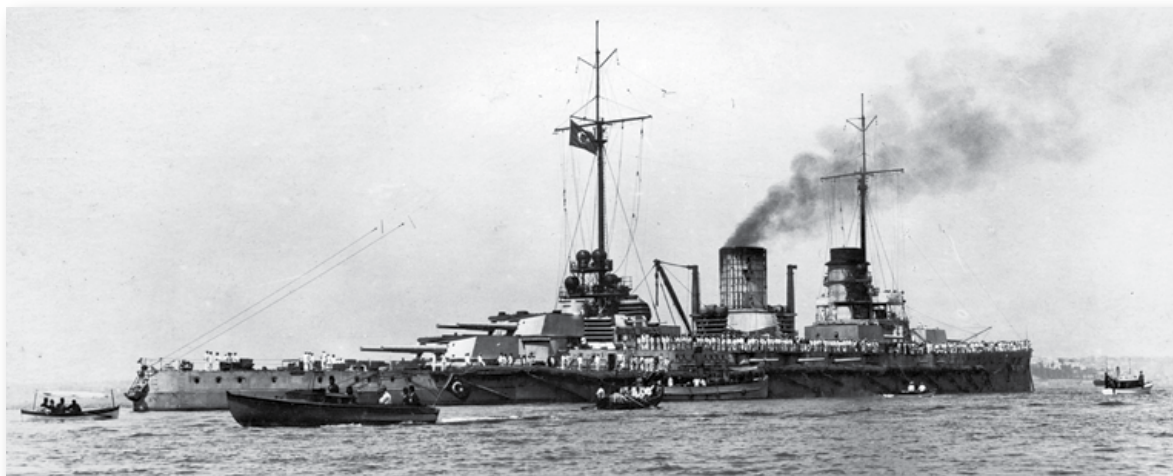
Ottoman defeats in the Italo-Turkish War and the First Balkan War prompted a *coup d'état* in the Ottoman Empire on January 23, 1913 by the leading members of the CUP movement, ending four years of political stalemate following the exile of Abdülhamid II. This consolidation of power created a more efficient environment for naval expansion, which was a matter that the leaders of the CUP energetically pursued, especially due to the poor performance of the Ottoman fleet in the First Balkan War. At the Battle of Elli on December 16, 1912, the Greek armored cruiser *Averof* alone outfought the battleships *Barbaros Hayreddin*, *Torgut Reis*, *Mesûdiye*, and *Âsâr-ı Tevfik* and, using superior tactics and speed, crossed the Ottoman "T" and forced them to disengage. The CUP leadership turned to Admiral Arthur Limpus (who had replaced Admiral Williams in the summer of 1912) for assistance. Limpus' labors certainly bore fruit for British shipyards; in November 1913 a contract was granted to Armstrong Whitworth to build a new shipyard, the Société Impériale Ottomane Co-intéressée des Docks et Chantiers, on the Golden Horn and in May 1914 two 4,330-ton light cruisers, two submarines, and four 1,100-ton destroyers were also ordered from the same yard. Ottoman warship purchases were still being made among the Triple Entente even after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914. The Ottoman government contracted a third dreadnought, to be named *Sultan Mehmed Fatieh*, from Vickers in July 1914 after obtaining further credit from French banks. The Ottoman Minister of Marine from March 10, 1914, as well as a member of the CUP inner circle, Ahmed Djemal Pasha got along well with the British and especially the French, attending the French

Navy's summer maneuvers in July 1914. Djemal's diplomacy was largely responsible for securing the necessary loans from Paris to complete the payments on *Sultan Osman I* and the other warship purchases of 1914; he also arranged an order of six new destroyers from Chantiers et Ateliers A. Normand. Given the level of naval cooperation with Great Britain and France in the summer of 1914, it seemed unlikely that within three months the Ottoman Empire would be at war with these two nations. Nevertheless, two events occurred on August 2, 1914 that set the Empire on a course for war with the Triple Entente.

While Djemal Pasha had pro-Entente leanings, the other primary power brokers in the CUP government, Minister of War Enver Pasha and Minister of the Interior Talaat Pasha, were unashamedly pro-German. Although the navy had been neglected during the rule of Abdülhamid II, the army had not, and German military advisors and industrialists had been very active in the military affairs of the Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Much of the CUP leadership had come from the army and had been under the influence of German military instructors

Minister of War Enver Pasha (left), who oversaw the Ottoman-German alliance in August 1914, and Minister of Marine Djemal Pasha (right), who pushed for the formation of a modern Ottoman fleet in the months leading up to World War I. (Library of Congress LC-DIG-matpc-11599)





Yavuz Sultan Selim, ex-Moltke class battlecruiser SMS *Goeben*, after her "sale" to the Ottoman Empire.

and advisors; Enver Pasha was himself a military attaché in Berlin for several years. As the Continent approached war in July 1914, Enver, Talaat, and other CUP ministers believed that Germany could be the only effective ally against Russia, whose designs on Ottoman territory and Constantinople itself were well known. They believed that Great Britain and France would not guarantee Ottoman territorial integrity in a European conflict if it meant sacrificing their alliance with Russia. Therefore on August 2, 1914, the CUP government concluded secret defensive alliances with Germany and its ally Austria-Hungary. This coincided with an event in Great Britain that drove the Ottoman government further into the embrace of the Central Powers. On that morning Captain Rauf Bey and a contingent of Ottoman sailors arrived at the gates of the Armstrong Whitworth shipyard to take delivery of the completed dreadnought *Sultan Osman I*. He never made it past the gate; he was informed that *Sultan Osman I*, as well as *Reşadiye*, were being requisitioned for use by the Royal Navy due to the mobilizations taking place on the Continent. The First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty, Winston Churchill, closely followed intelligence regarding the increasing numbers of German army advisors sent to Constantinople throughout the summer of 1914 and grew wary of the idea of powerful dreadnoughts being employed by a nation he believed was increasingly falling under the influence of Germany. Already on July 31 Churchill sent an order to Armstrong Whitworth forbidding them from handing over *Sultan Osman I* to the Ottomans. The confiscation of *Sultan Osman I* and *Reşadiye* caused a major uproar among the Ottoman populace. The loss of the "people's ships" was fully exploited by Enver, Talaat, and other pro-German ministers to encourage public support for the Central Powers.

Eight days later another naval incident occurred, which further wedded the Ottoman Empire to its alliance with Germany. In the early evening of August 11 the ships of the German Mittelmeerddivision,

Midilli, ex-Magdeburg class light cruiser SMS *Breslau*.





Commander of the Ottoman fleet and German Mittelmeerdivision Konteradmiral Wilhelm Souchon (center) and his officers. Kapitän zur See Richard Ackermann of *Yavuz* is two faces to the left of Souchon.

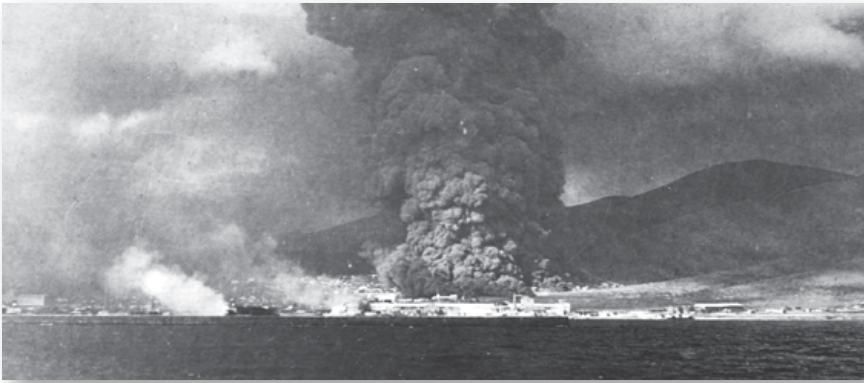
Ottoman fleet maneuvers. Admiral Souchon had only two months to prepare the Ottoman fleet for war from August to October 1914. From left to right: *Basra*, *Midilli*, and *Barbaros Hayreddin*. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R36430, photo: o.Ang)



the battlecruiser *Goeben* and light cruiser *Breslau*, appeared off the Dardanelles, and later that night were granted permission from Enver Pasha to enter the Straits. The British declaration of war on Germany on August 3 found the Mittelmeerdivision caught in the Mediterranean with little prospect of returning home. That day Enver contacted the Reichsmarineamt requesting that the two warships be sent to Constantinople. Enver argued that the presence of these two modern and powerful warships would even the balance of naval power in the Black Sea and possibly tip it in the Ottomans' favor as the Russians had no dreadnoughts or modern cruisers. The Reichsmarineamt concurred and wired secret instructions to the Mittelmeerdivision's commander, Konteradmiral

Wilhelm Souchon, to abandon operations in the Mediterranean and to make for Constantinople. In spite of the secret alliance with Germany, the Grand Vizier hoped to continue to keep the Empire out of the war and as a result the story was circulated to the Ottoman public and international community that the ships had been "purchased" from Germany to replace the dreadnoughts confiscated in Britain (despite this ruse, the ships remained under the command of the Kaiserliche Marine for the duration of the war). A formal "handover" ceremony took place on August 16 at which *Goeben* was renamed *Yavuz Sultan Selim* and *Breslau* as *Midilli* (for the technical specifications of *Yavuz* and *Midilli*, see Plates C and D, respectively). Djemal, having recently adopted a pro-German stance following the confiscation of *Sultan Osman I* and *Reşadiye*, accepted the "employ" of Admiral Souchon and his sailors in the Ottoman Navy. Admiral Limpus and the other officers of the British Naval Mission were assigned to "shore duties" in an attempt to retain a façade of neutrality but within a few weeks the Ottoman Navy was firmly in the German camp; the British Naval Mission was withdrawn from Constantinople on September 9 and Admiral Souchon was formally made commander of the Ottoman fleet on September 23.

Shortly after his arrival in Constantinople, Admiral Souchon began a joint Ottoman-German training program where his crews would help to work the major warships of the Ottoman fleet up to operational status by instructing their Ottoman counterparts in proper equipment maintenance, gunnery and torpedo handling and practice, fleet navigation and maneuver, and updated code and wireless communication. Souchon and his men quickly realized that they had their work cut out; out of all the major warships in the Ottoman fleet only one, *Hamidiye*, was in a state of combat readiness, let alone able to go to sea. The rest of the warships all looked well maintained from the outside, freshly painted with their wood and brass details



Smoke from oil tanks in Novorossiysk set on fire by the bombardment of *Berk-i Satvet* and *Midilli* on the morning of October 29, 1914.

polished, but below decks they were an engineer's nightmare. Watertight doors between bulkheads and safety hatches in turrets had been removed for ease of access, boilers had not been cleaned and were filled with filthy water, piles of coal and ash were found throughout the boiler rooms, routine machinery maintenance had been non-existent, and hulls had not been routinely cleaned. Regarding the fleet's manpower, Ottoman crews had little experience in gunnery, torpedo, and fleet movement exercises while the navy's engineers did not have adequate training for the maintenance of the machinery, electrical and communication systems, and wireless equipment aboard the ships.

The need among the Ottoman fleet for technical expertise was so desperate that Souchon sent a message to the German naval command requesting that additional technical personnel be dispatched from Germany immediately. Over 500 specialists, known as *Sonderkommando der Kaiserliche Marine in der Türkei* and headed by Vizeadmiral Guido von Usedom, arrived in Constantinople by August 29. Out of this group Admiral Usedom formed the *Sonderkommando-Dardanellen*, made up of gunnery instructors, artillery crews, minelaying crews, and signal technicians, which was sent to oversee the organization of the Dardanelles coastal defenses. The remaining specialists were distributed around the ships of the Ottoman fleet. Over the course of the next two months the Germans worked feverishly to train their Ottoman counterparts in proper handling, maintenance, and maneuver of their warships as well as giving instruction in gunnery, torpedo, and mine laying tactics. Out of practical necessity a German commanding officer was assigned to each major Ottoman warship and led combat operations, while the respective Ottoman commanders maintained order aboard the ships and oversaw operations while in port. German engineers were also assigned to each ship as breakdowns were frequent among the wide variety of machinery on the various warships.

For almost three months after the signing of the German-Ottoman alliance, the Ottoman government consistently delayed its entry into the war on the Continent despite continued appeals from Germany and Austria-Hungary. This exchange went on for over two months until Germany, tired of the constant Ottoman vacillating, threatened a cancellation of the alliance and the withdrawal of all German military missions in the Empire. Unwilling to risk a break with Germany, Enver and the most pro-German members of the government secretly issued orders to Admiral Souchon on October 24 that allowed him to commence hostilities with Russia through a surprise naval attack. At 1545hrs on October 27, Souchon called a meeting aboard *Yavuz* of the German and Ottoman officers of the fleet. There he explained that several task forces would immediately put

to sea with the intention of beginning hostilities against Russia, and each ship’s commander was given sealed orders regarding their operational objectives. At 1700hrs *Yavuz* signaled “Do the utmost for the future of Turkey,” the sealed orders were opened, and the ships began steaming up the Bosphorus towards the Black Sea. Throughout the early morning hours of October 29, Ottoman warships began to appear out of the mist at a number of points off the Russian coast. The first shots of World War I in the Black Sea were fired by the Ottoman destroyers *Muâvenet-i Milliye* and *Gayret-i Vatâniye* when they slipped into Odessa harbor and opened fire at 0300hrs. Throughout the early morning, *Yavuz* with the destroyers *Samsun* and *Taşoz* bombarded Sevastopol, *Hamidiye* attacked Feodosia, and *Berk-i Satvet* and *Midilli* shelled Novorossiysk. Considering it was a surprise attack, the results fell far below expectations; only two small warships and a handful of merchant ships were sunk. But there was no turning back now; Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on November 2, much to the delight of the German High Command in Berlin.

GERMAN-OTTOMAN OPERATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA, 1914–17

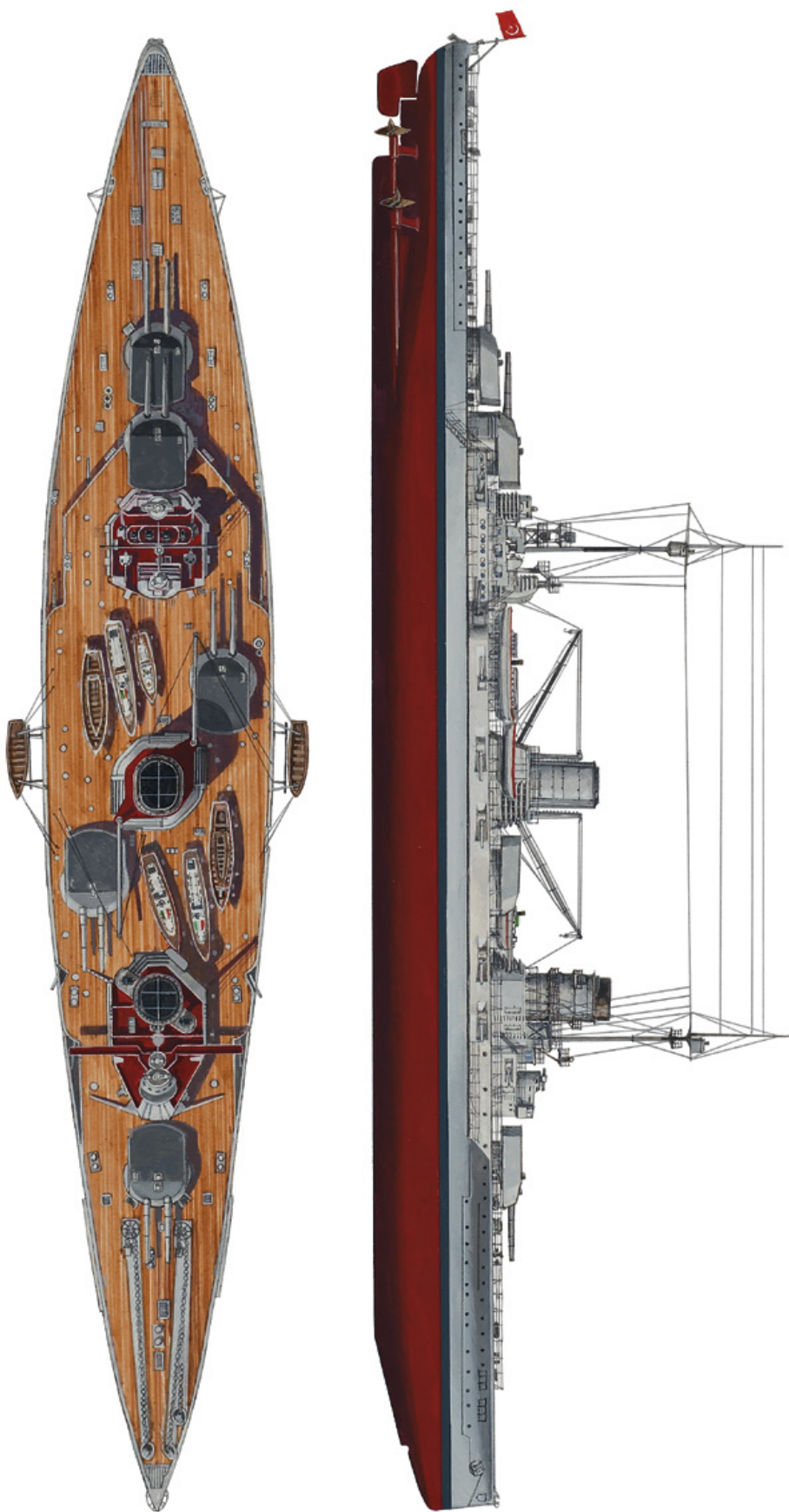
The Black Sea was the most active theater of naval operations for the Ottoman Empire during the war, but it was also the theater for which it was least prepared. The battleships *Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis* were too slow for service in the Black Sea and the Demirhisar class torpedo boats lacked the range for fleet operations; this left only the protected cruisers *Hamidiye* and *Mecidiye* and the

Yavuz Specifications	
Dimensions	length: 611ft 11in; beam: 96ft 10in; draft: 26ft 11in
Displacement	22,616 tons
Ship's Complement	1,322 Germans, 24 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	ten 28cm SK L/50 primary guns in a forward twin turret, two offset center turrets, and two superfiring aft turrets; 12 15cm SK L/45 secondary guns in casemate turrets located amidships in the upper deck (two of these guns were landed for use as shore batteries in 1915); 12 8.8cm SK L/45 guns (supplemented by four additional 8.8cm antiaircraft guns in 1915); four 50cm underwater torpedo tubes (located in the bow, the stern, and one on each beam)
Machinery	four Parsons turbines, coal-fired by 24 Schulz-Thornycroft boilers, producing up to 85,000 IHP and turning four screws at 28 knots (1914)
Protection	armored belt: 10.7in at the center, tapering to 4in fore and aft; conning tower: 14in; barbettes: 9in; turrets: 9in on the front, 7in on the sides, 3.5in on top; casemates: 5.9in; armored deck: 2in with 2in sloped armor connecting to the belt



YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM

Laid down in the Blohm & Voss yards in Hamburg in August 1909, as the second battlecruiser of the Moltke class, and originally commissioned into the Kaiserliche Marine as *Goeben* in August 1912, *Yavuz Sultan Selim* was the most powerful warship to fly the Ottoman ensign and arguably the best warship of any nation to serve in the Black Sea (considering speed, armament, and protection) during World War I. Although she had little success against the warships of the Black Sea Fleet in combat, her ability to strike and withdraw anywhere throughout the region made her a singular “Fleet in Being” to the Russian, British, and French navies. It was a testament to her rugged design and construction, as well as the work of German and Ottoman engineers and repair crews, that she was able to operate throughout the war without access to a dry-dock, especially in light of combat damage she sustained; during the war *Yavuz* suffered damage from six 30.5cm shells, five mines, and three aerial bombs.





Colliers anchored at the port of Zonguldak in northern Anatolia. The mines of this underdeveloped region were the only major domestic source of coal in the empire, and the coal could only be shipped to Constantinople by sea.

Looking towards the Galata Bridge and the New Mosque (Yeni Cami) in Constantinople with the Bosphorus beyond. As the city was the transport and industrial center of the empire, almost all goods moved through it for distribution, primarily by means of maritime transport. The mix of steamers and sailing ships in this photo highlight the variety of vessels upon which the Empire's survival relied.



Samsun and Muâvenet class destroyers for potential use, and the combat value of these vessels against their Russian equivalents was negligible. Nevertheless, Admiral Souchon believed he held two trump cards with *Yavuz* and *Midilli*, assuming that superior speed would give him the initiative and tactical advantage in any engagement against the Russians. This was the case until the middle of 1915 when the initiative of operations in the Black Sea shifted to the Russians for the remainder of the naval campaign. The reason for this was poor Ottoman transport infrastructure rather than Russian naval

strength, however. Most of the Empire's coal was mined in Northern Anatolia around the ports of Zonguldak, Ereğli, and Kozlu, from where it was shipped by sea to Constantinople as there were no railway lines in the region. This seaborne supply line would be vulnerable to attack by raiding Russian warships, and the importance of securing this 150 nautical mile route was immediately recognized by Admiral Souchon.

The Ottoman reliance upon seaborne transport for the Caucasus Theater and for coal deliveries to Constantinople likewise became all too apparent to Admiral Andrei Augustovich Ebergard, commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. On March 1 his warships undertook their first major bombardment of the northern Anatolian coal ports. What followed was a continuous effort by the Black Sea Fleet to loosely blockade the coal ports through regular raids for the next three years. Prior to the concerted Russian efforts against Ottoman coal transport, roughly 285,000 tons of coal was shipped by sea to Constantinople between November 1914 and June 1915, equaling around 36,000 tons per month; the monthly shipments severely decreased after this period. A monthly minimum of 30,000 tons was required to meet the basic needs of the merchant marine, Bosphorus ferries, Constantinople's power plants, the munitions plants, and the Empire's railways, not to mention the civilian population and their domestic heating needs. Bearing in mind that *Yavuz* and *Midilli*'s bunkers alone had coal capacities of 3,050 tons and 1,200 tons respectively, it immediately became apparent how easily a severely limited coal supply could restrict the fleet's operations.

With coal transport being the logistical Achilles heel for the Ottomans, the main priority for the fleet became the protection of the seaborne supply routes. At first Souchon employed as many Ottoman warships as he could for

convoy protection, but as time went on his options were increasingly limited; only *Yavuz*, *Midilli*, *Hamidiye*, and *Mecidiye* could effectively oppose the nine new Russian destroyers of the Bespokoiny class that entered service in late 1914 and early 1915. These 1,100-ton destroyers, armed with three 4in guns and ten 18in torpedoes, and boasting a top speed of 34 knots, conducted a number of hit-and-run missions against the Ottoman coal ports, occasionally sailing into unguarded harbors and sinking transports at anchor. By the end of 1915, the Ottomans had lost 40,077 GRT of steamer transport shipping in the Black Sea out of a prewar total of 108,220 GRT of steamer transport for the entire Ottoman merchant marine. Bearing in mind that only a portion of the Ottoman merchant marine was available for use in the Black Sea, the loss of 37 percent of the entire merchant steamer fleet in a single theater of operations in 14 months was devastating. Some help came in June 1915 when the Kaiserliche Marine formed the U-Halbflottille Konstantinopel and stationed a small number of U-boats at Constantinople and later at Varna for the remainder of the war. While their efforts produced only minimal results (only around 35,000 GRT of Allied merchant shipping sunk in the Black Sea) and there were usually never more than three or four available for duty at any one time (only 14 different U-boats were based for various deployments at Constantinople and most were the smaller UB and UC class coastal U-boats), Russian naval commanders were always fearful of the threat of U-boat attack and only allowed their pre-dreadnoughts and later dreadnoughts to conduct missions under heavy escort. Mention should also be made of Bulgaria, which joined the Central Powers in the war on October 14, 1915, and its naval efforts in the Black Sea. The Bulgarian Navy had six Torpilleur Type 38 M class torpedo boats (the same as those of the *Demirhisar* class) that served in the Black Sea but their operations were restricted by the same range and speed limitations as their Ottoman counterparts. The Bulgarian Navy's most important contribution to the Central Powers was the use of its facilities, particularly at Varna, as bases for U-boats and aircraft. The Bulgarians also provided 5,227 NRT of steamer merchant shipping for troop, supply, and coal transport for the Ottomans.

By early 1916, *Yavuz* and *Midilli* were the only warships left to the Germans and the Ottomans that were not completely outclassed in the Black Sea. *Yavuz*, however, was no longer the only dreadnought-type warship, as the Russian dreadnoughts *Imperatritsa Mariya* and *Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya* both entered service in the second half of 1915. The only encounter between dreadnoughts in the Black Sea took place on January 8, 1916, when *Yavuz* stumbled into *Imperatritsa Ekaterina* while pursuing two Russian destroyers. *Imperatritsa Ekaterina*'s guns outranged those of *Yavuz* and several near misses fell around the battlecruiser before her superior speed allowed her



German U-boat UB 14 served with the U-Halbflottille Konstantinopel from June 1915 to November 1918. She sank only three Russian vessels totaling 2,493 tons during that period plus the British submarine E20. Nevertheless, the presence of a handful of U-boats in the Black Sea intimidated the leadership of the Black Sea Fleet.

to pull out of range. Souchon could not afford to lose his two best ships in a duel with the Russian dreadnoughts; at the same time, with no other suitable warships at his disposal, he was forced to deploy them on a variety of missions, including serving as fast transports for desperately needed supplies on the Caucasus Front and conducting hit-and-run raids to show the flag and boost Ottoman morale. The last mission undertaken by both *Yavuz* and *Midilli* in the Black Sea was one of these hit-and-run raids, which targeted the ports of Tuapse and Sochi in the Caucasus in early July 1916. This hit-and-run raid apparently showed the Russians that they did not have total mastery of the Black Sea, as *Yavuz* and *Midilli* were easily able to avoid the enemy, and as a result Admiral Ebergard was sacked as commander of the Black Sea Fleet. He was replaced by Vice Admiral Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak, who shifted Russian strategy and undertook a mine offensive against the waters off the entrance to the Bosphorus and the Bulgarian port of Varna.

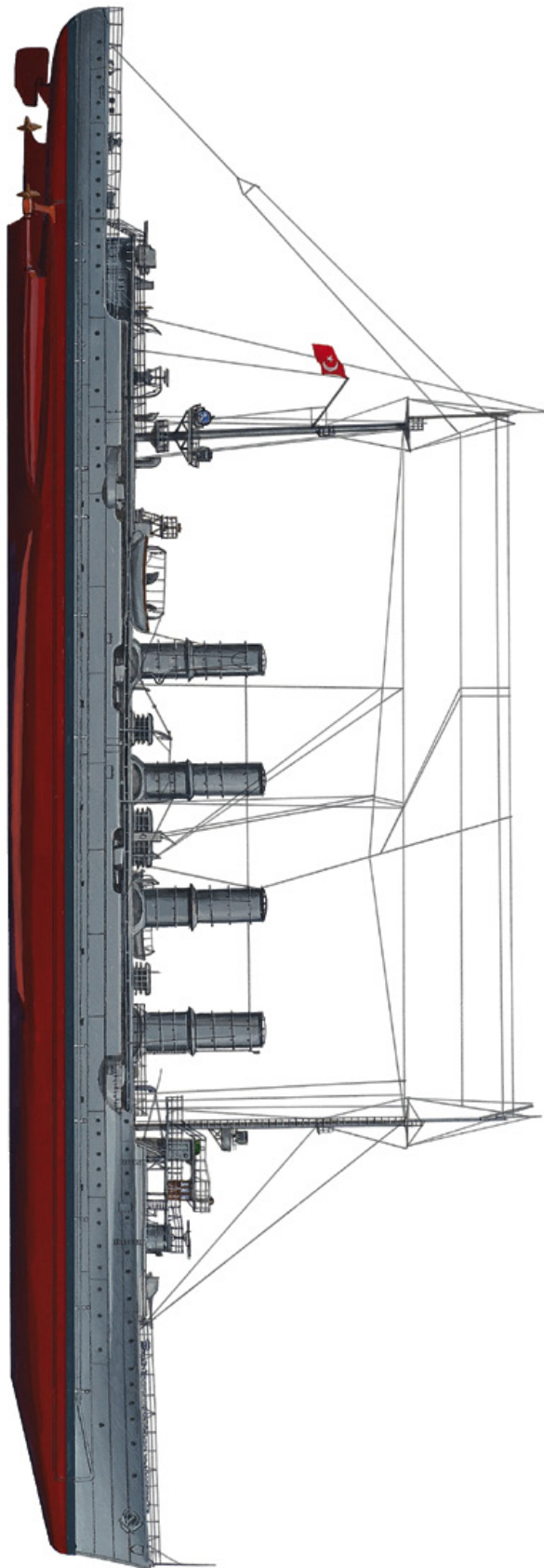
These new minefields severely restricted traffic into and out of these waterways. A long-overdue need for maintenance and decreasing coal supplies forced *Yavuz* and *Midilli* into port in the autumn of 1916, and this left the smaller vessels of the Ottoman fleet to contend with the Russian mine threat. Several gunboats as well as older torpedo boats and destroyers of the Antalya, Demirhisar, and Samsun classes were outfitted with ersatz minesweeping gear sent from Germany. After weeks of patient and difficult work by the Ottoman fleet's ersatz minesweepers, a channel was cleared for shallow and deep-draft vessels to transit the Bosphorus by September 29, allowing the limited but precious coal shipments from Northern Anatolia to resume once again. Aircraft began working in concert with the fleet's minesweeper groups, helping to locate newly laid minefields. The primary naval aviation unit to operate over the Black Sea was the Wasserfliegerabteilung of the Sonderkommando der Kaiserliche

Midilli Specifications	
Dimensions	length: 455ft; beam: 43ft 11in; draft: 16ft 10in
Displacement	4,570 tons
Ship's Complement	426 Germans, 6 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	12 10.5cm SK L/45 C/11 guns in 1914, changed to eight 15cm SK L/45 guns in 1917; two 500mm torpedo tubes; up to 120 mines
Machinery	two AEG-Vulcan turbines, coal-fired by 16 AG Vulcan marine boilers, producing up to 33,482 IHP and driving four screws at a maximum speed of 27.5 knots
Protection	armored belt: 2¼in amidships tapering to ¾in at the bow with no stern protection; conning tower: 4in on the sides, ¾in on the roof; gun shields: 2in; armored deck: 2¼in forward tapering to 1½in amidships to ¾in at the stern with 1½in sloped armor connecting the deck with the belt

D

MIDILLI

Laid down by AG Vulcan in Stettin in 1910 and originally commissioned into the Kaiserliche Marine as SMS *Breslau* in May 1912, the modern light cruiser *Midilli* saw the most action of any warship under the Ottoman ensign during World War I. *Midilli* was the perfect jack-of-all-trades vessel for the Ottoman fleet. From October 1914 to January 1918 she undertook at least 18 raiding/shore-bombardment missions, and on three of these raids she encountered and successfully evaded Russian dreadnoughts. On six occasions she escorted transports to Eastern Anatolia and transported troops and supplies there herself seven times. Finally, *Midilli* effectively served as a minelayer. The cruisers of the Magdeburg class had a lowered rear quarterdeck which acted as a mine deck with two rows of 60 mines on each side, and *Midilli* laid six minefields in the Black Sea during the war.





*Yavuz and Midilli at their anchorage in Istinye north of Constantinople along the Bosphorus, photographed in June 1916 by German Army airship SL 10. The destroyers and torpedo boats of the Ottoman fleet are moored side-by-side just above *Yavuz* (all with awnings over their decks). As coal supplies continued to dwindle in 1916, the fleet became increasingly inactive.*

Marine in der Türkei, which established aircraft stations at Anatoli Kawak, Zonguldak, Eregli, Varna, and Constanta during 1916.

The growing internal chaos in Russia in mid-1917 brought a respite to the hard-pressed Ottoman minesweeping and transport forces. Increased German and Ottoman aerial reconnaissance allowed for effective tracking of Russian naval movements. When Russian ships were absent, small sailing ships and barges loaded with coal, towed by small motor boats, sailed from Zonguldak and Eregli to Constantinople. These small convoys avoided further detection by Russian ships by sailing close to shore and hiding in small bays and inlets along the coast at night. The amount of coal brought in via these small vessels was not insignificant either: around 12,000 tons was delivered from Northern Anatolia in the month of June, roughly double the amount from the previous month. There may not have been enough coal to put the fleet to sea, but these imports, combined with those from Germany, were enough to keep the region's industries and power plants going and allowed the build up of a small naval reserve.

German U-boats, having sat in port for six months because of the extensive minefields off the coast, began to deploy into the Black Sea again at the end of June, a symbolic triumph for the minesweeping units. By the end of October, revolution had finally crippled the operations of the Black Sea Fleet as mutinous sailors began to turn on their officers. On December 15 an armistice was signed between the Central Powers and the new Bolshevik Government. The actions of the German and Ottoman surface vessels, U-boats, and aircraft, while not necessarily spectacular compared to other naval theaters of the war, played a decisive role in keeping the Ottoman war machine supplied with vital coal. The following sections outline the primary warship-on-warship engagements between the German-Ottoman naval forces and the Black Sea Fleet.

Rumpler and Friedrichshafen floatplanes of the Wasserfliegerabteilung at a base near Varna. A network of small floatplane stations along the Romanian-Bulgarian-Ottoman coastline allowed aircraft to maintain reconnaissance of Russian warship movements and minelaying operations.



Yavuz versus the Pre-Dreadnoughts of the Black Sea Fleet

On the morning of November 17, 1914, after learning that the Russian Black Sea Fleet was bombarding the eastern Anatolian port of Trebizond, Admiral Souchon immediately set sail with *Yavuz* and *Midilli*, hoping to intercept the Russians before they returned to Sevastopol. A battlecruiser and light cruiser taking on a force of five pre-dreadnoughts, three cruisers, and 13 destroyers initially may have seemed like a foolhardy proposition, but Souchon believed that with his ships' superior speed he could bring his force's full broadside to bear against individual targets while being able to outmaneuver any Russian attempt to cross his T or form a line of battle. Shortly after noon in foggy conditions on November 18, Souchon spotted the pre-dreadnoughts of the Black Sea Fleet, sailing in line south of Cape Sarych at the southwestern tip of the Crimea. While Souchon brought his ships up to full speed and began a turn to starboard in order to bring *Yavuz*'s full broadside to bear, Admiral Andrei Augustovich Ebergard ordered his flagship *Evstafi* to open fire at 1224hrs. It was an excellent shot as one of the shells struck *Yavuz* amidships as she was still completing her turn. Two minutes later Souchon returned fire, although the mist was hampering the spotting efforts of his gunnery officers; the first salvo went long but one shell penetrated *Evstafi*'s funnel and burst on exiting, sending shrapnel over the deck and, most importantly, knocking out the ship's wireless antenna and making it impossible for Ebergard to correct the range of his following ships. *Yavuz* bracketed *Evstafi* after its second salvo, and beginning with the German third salvo the Russian flagship began to suffer. Then, after only five minutes of battle, Souchon turned away and headed to the southwest at full speed; the Germans were withdrawing from the fight. Ebergard could not understand why; *Yavuz* was pummeling *Evstafi* and the Russians were not able to score any further hits on the battlecruiser. Nevertheless, the Russian admiral breathed a sigh of relief and turned his force for home.

Aboard *Yavuz* things were anything but calm; *Evstafi*'s single hit had penetrated one of the portside 5.9in gun casemates and exploded inside, killing the gun crew and setting off the shells stored inside. Flames from the explosion set several propellant charges on fire in the casemate and flames also shot into the secondary ammunition hoist nearby; there was fear of an imminent magazine explosion. When word of this critical situation reached the conning tower, Souchon decided to break off the engagement lest another hit trigger an ammunition explosion. By the time damage-control parties had informed Souchon that the damage had been contained, *Yavuz* was already steaming full speed away from the Russians. Ironically, this confused and indecisive battle was the first battleship-on-battleship engagement of World War I. The battle of Cape Sarych demonstrated both the strength and the weakness of the Ottoman naval situation in the Black Sea. Its strength lay in *Yavuz*'s ability to disengage whenever it chose without fear of pursuit; its weakness was that, if *Yavuz* was lost, so was any effective Ottoman naval presence in the theater. This

Yavuz being coaled with a collier alongside. As it took 3,050 tons of coal to fill the battlecruiser's bunkers, this became a rare sight in 1915 and 1916 as coal shipments to Constantinople dropped.



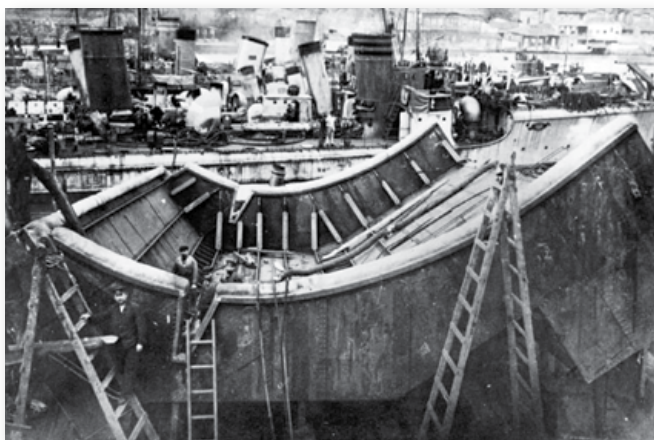
View of the lead ships of the Russian battle line (*Evstafi*, followed by *Ioann Zlatoust* and *Panteleimon*) at the battle of Cape Sarych on November 18, 1914. *Evstafi* has just been bracketed by *Yavuz*'s fire, as a splash can be seen just in front of the pre-dreadnought and one just beyond.



weakness was made more painfully clear on December 26, 1914, when *Yavuz* hit two mines in a minefield off the entrance to the Bosphorus, secretly laid by the Russians on December 21. This belated Christmas gift kept *Yavuz* out of action until April 1915.

On May 10, 1915, *Yavuz* undertook another interdiction mission, after receiving a transmission from the destroyer *Nümüne-i Hamiyet* that a Russian task force containing the battleships *Tri Sviatitelia* and *Panteleimon* was approaching the Bosphorus. What Kapitän zur See Richard Ackermann of *Yavuz* did not realize was that Ebergard and the other three Russian pre-dreadnoughts, *Evstafi*, *Joann Zlatoust*, and *Rostislav*, were cruising 25 miles off the entrance to the Bosphorus, covering the bombardment group reported by *Nümüne-i Hamiyet*. At 0753hrs Ebergard's battle line, sailing at 5 knots, intercepted *Yavuz*, which was steaming on a parallel course at 26 knots. Ackermann, confused that he was facing three battleships instead of two, soon realized why his opponent was cruising at such a slow pace; minutes later *Tri Sviatitelia* and *Panteleimon* caught up with Ebergard and joined battle. Ackermann then realized that he was now engaging all five Russian battleships, and after taking a heavy-caliber hit to the forecastle and another to the forward armored belt, he decided to disengage at 0806hrs. The battle was a poor showing for *Yavuz*; out of the 160 11in shells fired, not a single one struck the enemy. The only "damage" sustained by the Russians was when a near miss on *Evstafi* sent a cascade of water over her flying bridge, drenching Ebergard and his staff. Fortunately for Ackermann, the damage caused by the Russian hits was minimal, and he disrupted the Russian operations off the Anatolian coast by taking Ebergard on a wild goose chase to the north before doubling back and heading for home. Nevertheless, this was a small return for *Yavuz*'s poor firing and it was fortunate for the Ottomans that their

A large steel caisson made by German and Ottoman engineers at Istinye to cover one of the sections of *Yavuz*'s hull damaged by mines on December 26, 1914. The caissons allowed water to be pumped out and the damaged hull sections to be repaired, as there was no dry-dock large enough to accommodate *Yavuz* in Constantinople. The Muâvenet-i Milliye class destroyers are moored just behind the caisson.

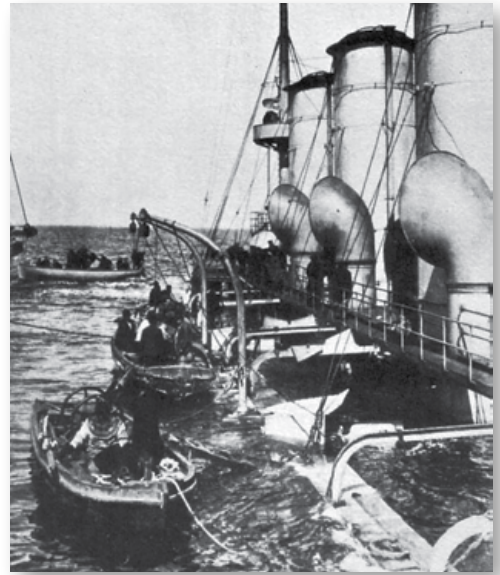


most important ship was able to again escape intact from the battleships of the Black Sea Fleet.

The Last Ottoman Fleet Action

On March 28, 1915, the Black Sea Fleet bombarded the entrance of the Bosphorus, an action intended to serve as a diversion from the much larger British and French naval operations off the Dardanelles. Souchon decided to undertake a large raid to demonstrate that the Ottoman Navy could regain the initiative in the Black Sea. The target was Odessa, where intelligence reported that around twenty Russian

transports were at anchor and relatively unguarded. Korvettenkapitän Ernst Büchsel, commander of the *Mecidiye*, was ordered to attack the transports in Odessa with a strike force consisting of the cruisers *Hamidiye* and *Mecidiye* and the destroyers *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, *Yâdigâr-ı Millet*, *Samsun*, and *Taşoz*. The exact locations of Russian minefields off Odessa were not known so the destroyers were equipped with minesweeping gear; they would slowly clear a path for the two cruisers, which would then enter the harbor and bombard the transports. Souchon would cover the operation out to sea to the east aboard the recently repaired *Yavuz*, in company with *Midilli*. With the attack scheduled for dawn on April 3 (intentionally selected as it was Russian Orthodox Easter Sunday and intended to be a blow against Russian morale), the Ottoman warships slipped out of the Bosphorus on April 1 and steamed across the Black Sea undetected. At 2300hrs on April 2 the attack group reached the waters off Odessa, and Büchsel ordered the destroyers to deploy their minesweeping gear. The destroyers crept forward at a speed of 9 knots with the two cruisers following behind. Around 0400hrs on April 3 the minesweeping gear on *Samsun* and *Taşoz* fouled, leaving only the other two destroyers to sweep for the cruisers. Everything proceeded well, with Odessa spotted ahead at 0600hrs, but at 0640hrs *Mecidiye* struck a mine located 15 miles to the southeast of the Odessa lighthouse. The mine, missed by *Muâvenet-i Milliye* and *Yâdigâr-ı Millet*, exploded on the port side of the cruiser and the intruding water quickly extinguished the fires in the boilers; without steam *Mecidiye* slowed to a crawl and sank, hitting the bottom at a depth of 12.8m. The decks were awash but the rest of the superstructure remained above water so the crew removed the gun-breeches and destroyed the radio and all documents. After the crew was taken off, *Yâdigâr-ı Millet* fired a torpedo into the *Mecidiye* in an attempt to destroy her, but she remained fast on the bottom. Around 0720hrs Souchon ordered the mission to be abandoned, and directed *Hamidiye* and the destroyers to return to the Bosphorus. At 1230hrs Büchsel's group received a message from *Yavuz* that the Russian fleet was at sea and in pursuit. The Ottoman ships managed to evade the Russians and slipped back into the Bosphorus on the morning of April 4. The mission had been a failure; for the loss of a cruiser, Souchon managed to sink only two Russian transports, which happened to cross the path of *Yavuz* and *Midilli* on the morning of April 3. Büchsel's task force had not even been successful in scuttling *Mecidiye*; she was eventually salvaged by the Russians, repaired, and renamed *Prut*. This was to be the last Ottoman fleet action in the Black Sea.



Russian divers and work crews beginning salvage operations on *Mecidiye* in shallow water off Odessa. Renamed *Prut*, she served briefly with the Black Sea Fleet after being overhauled, given 16 new boilers, and armed with two 130mm B7 guns taken from the still-completing super-dreadnought *Imperator Aleksandr III*.

Cruiser Operations in 1915

The German and Ottoman cruisers fared little better than *Yavuz* in their encounters with the Russians in 1915. On the evening of June 10, *Midilli* intercepted the Bespokoiny destroyers *Derzkiy* and *Gnevniiy* off the Bosphorus after they had attacked shipping off Zonguldak. *Midilli* struck first, hitting *Gnevniiy*'s steam pipes, causing her to lose power. It appeared to *Midilli*'s commander that *Gnevniiy* was finished and, not wishing to put his vessel at any further risk, he contented himself to return to the Bosphorus, believing he had

Hamidiye off the Vorontsov lighthouse near Odessa while on a convoy mission during the Austro-German advance into Ukraine in early 1918. *Hamidiye* returned to service following the December 16, 1917 armistice with the Bolshevik government in Moscow and participated in the Central Powers' occupation of the Crimea and Caucasus.



sunk one of the Black Sea Fleet's best destroyers. That was not the case, however; although *Gnevniy* was without power she was in no immediate danger of sinking and she was towed back to Sevastopol by *Derzkiy*. Unnecessary caution on the part of *Midilli*'s commander, Kapitän zur See Leberecht von Klitzing, prevented the cruiser from finishing off the *Gnevniy*. *Midilli* did not have a chance to make up for her poor performance in the battle of June 10–11; in the early morning hours of July 18 she struck a mine off the Bosphorus as she sailed out to escort an incoming coal convoy. She was struck on the starboard side, but managed to limp back to base at Istinye, having taken on over 600 tons of water. She would not be ready for service again until February 1916. This left *Hamidiye* as the only cruiser available for convoy-protection and enemy-interception duty in the Black Sea. *Hamidiye*'s first opportunity against the enemy came on September 5 when she, along with the destroyers *Muâvenet-i Milliye* and *Nümûne-i Hamiyet*, sailed from Zonguldak, escorting three colliers with a cargo of 10,000 tons of coal destined for Constantinople. At 0630hrs *Hamidiye* spotted the Russian destroyers *Bystry* and *Pronzitelny* and attacked. Luck was not with the Ottomans that morning, for after firing only 34 shots, both of *Hamidiye*'s recently installed Krupp 15cm SK L/45 guns malfunctioned and could not be fixed (the bow gun failed after its first shot!). The Russian destroyers began a steady fire but sailed just beyond the range of *Hamidiye*'s secondary armament and the guns aboard the Ottoman destroyers. Shortly after 0900hrs *Hamidiye* spotted a submarine periscope and she and her destroyer escorts began evasive action, leaving the colliers to fend for themselves. *Bystry* and *Pronzitelny* then turned their guns' attention to the colliers, which had driven themselves ashore, and left them flaming wrecks. Due to her slow speed and vulnerability to the new Russian destroyers, Souchon decided to lay *Hamidiye* up in Constantinople until the spring of 1918.

***Midilli*'s Raid on Schlangen Island**

In early June 1917, *Midilli* was finally ready for service after a lengthy refit, with eight new 15cm SK L/45 guns replacing its old armament of 10.5cm SK L/45 guns. Souchon was eager to make a show of force against the Russians and had

just enough coal to send *Midilli* to sea. On the evening of June 23, *Midilli* sailed out of the Bosphorus; its mission was to capture and destroy the Russian radio station on Schlangen Island and then lay a minefield between the island and the mouth of the Danube. Reconnaissance information was relayed to *Midilli* from floatplanes of the Wasserfliegerabteilung throughout June 24, and the cruiser laid an undetected 70-mine barrage on the evening of June 24–25 before proceeding to Schlangen Island. Around 0300hrs on the 25th, *Midilli* reached the island, but before it could send a landing party

ashore to capture the radio station, the cruiser's wireless room picked up signals coming from the island's station. Fearing that his ship had been discovered and that the Russians were calling for assistance, *Midilli's* commander, Korvettenkapitän Wolfram von Knorr, turned the cruiser's guns on the station and levelled it. A landing party was sent ashore after the brief bombardment and took a handful of prisoners; unfortunately the Germans were unable to locate any codebooks in the ruins of the radio station. After retrieving the landing party, *Midilli* set a course for the Bosphorus, its mission accomplished and having no desire to face any Russian warships. *Midilli's* captain made a wise decision; a Russian torpedo boat stopped at Schlangen Island at mid-morning on the 25th and reported *Midilli's* raid to Russian naval command. Shortly before noon, however, *Midilli* spotted smoke; it happened to be the dreadnought *Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya* and the destroyer *Gnevnyi*, which had been en route to the Bosphorus to cover a minelaying mission. The Russian battleship fired a number of salvos at *Midilli* but the cruiser managed to stay just out of range with her superior speed. As she approached the Bosphorus around at 1630hrs, the destroyer *Basra* sailed out to support her. Unfortunately *Basra* could only make 18 knots and *Midilli* had to slow so as not to overtake her. The slower speed allowed *Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya* to catch up and *Midilli* was put in the awkward position of defending *Basra*, which was supposed to be escorting her. During her refit *Midilli* had been equipped with an artificial fog generator, which it now activated to obscure her and *Basra* from the Russians' fire. After a harried pursuit, *Midilli* and *Basra* reached the entrance to the Bosphorus at 1715hrs and the Russians turned away. *Midilli's* raid on Schlangen Island and subsequent escape was a major embarrassment for the Black Sea Fleet, demonstrating that the Russian mine offensive was unsuccessful in completely eliminating German-Ottoman naval activity in the Black Sea.



Midilli moored at the naval base at Istinye. *Midilli* was out of service from July 1916 to June 1917 for a period of maintenance and repairs, in which she was rearmed with eight new 15cm guns imported from Germany. (courtesy Gunter Hartnagel Collection)

OPERATIONS IN THE DARDANELLES, 1915–18

When the Ottoman Empire entered the war, the only ice-free sea route to Russia via the Dardanelles was closed, cutting off vital supplies of munitions from Great Britain and France. The Ottoman military leadership and their German allies recognized the strategic importance of the closure of the Dardanelles and realized

Demirhisar Class Specifications (Demirhisar , Hamidâbad , Sivrihisar , and Sultanhisar)

Dimensions	length: 131ft 11in; beam: 14ft 5in; draft: 8ft 6in
Displacement	97.5 tons
Ship's Complement	four Germans, 32 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	two 37mm/40 Hotchkiss QF guns; one 450mm torpedo tube in the bow, two on trainable mounts on deck
Machinery	one triple expansion engine, coal-fired by two Du Temple water tube boilers, producing up to 2,200 IHP and turning one screw at a maximum speed of 26 knots (16 knots by 1915)

Muâvenet-i Milliye Class Specifications (Muâvenet-i Milliye , Gayret-i Vatâniye , Nümûne-i Hamiyet , Yâdigâr-ı Millet)

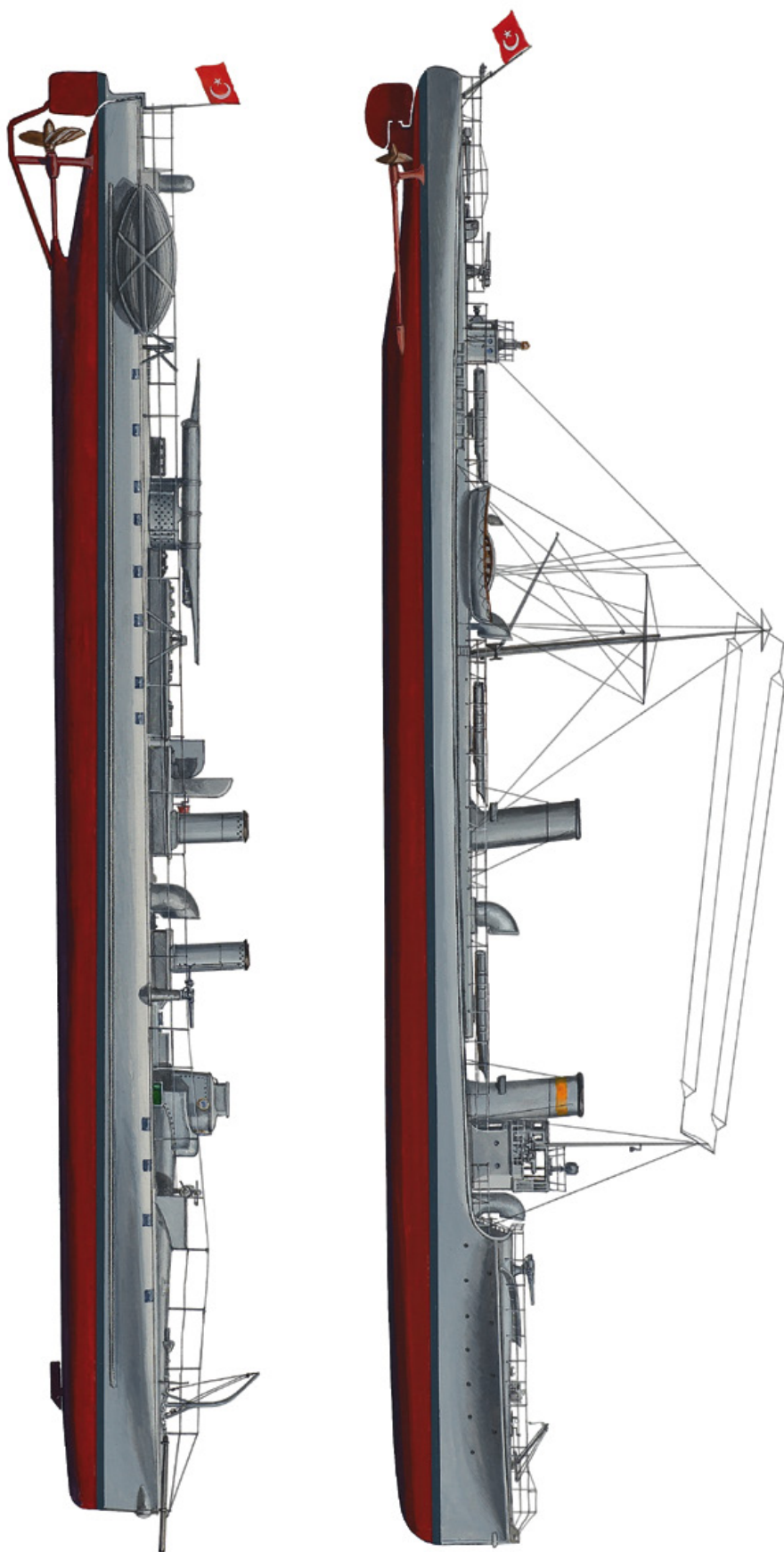
Dimensions	length: 242ft 9in; beam: 25ft 11in; draft: 9ft 10in
Displacement	765 tons
Ship's Complement	23 Germans, 89 Ottomans (1915)
Armament	two 75mm L/50 QF and two 57mm L/50 QF guns; three 450mm torpedo tubes on trainable mounts on deck
Machinery	two Schichau turbines, coal-fired by two Schichau marine boilers, producing up to 17,700 IHP and turning two screws at a maximum speed of 32 knots (26 knots by 1915)

that the area would be a primary target for Allied naval and amphibious assault. Since early September 1914, Admiral von Usedom's Sonderkommando-Dardanellen had worked hard to modernize and consolidate the defenses around the Straits. The most heavily defended area of the Dardanelles was the 15 miles from the entrance up to the area known as the Narrows where the distance between the European and Asian shores decreases to less than a mile. The entrance to the Dardanelles was protected by coastal forts at Cape Helles and Kum Kale, and just inside the Straits was an intermediate defensive zone made up of a few fixed fortifications and mobile howitzer and mortar batteries. At the entrance to the Narrows was the inner defensive zone made up of coastal forts mounting 37 heavy Krupp guns. The fortifications and mobile battery arrangement of the inner and intermediate defensive zones within the Straits provided an overlapping field of fire that covered the primary Ottoman defenses: two minefields consisting of five lines of mines each; one minefield located in the Narrows, the other around three miles down the Straits near Kephez Point.

On February 15, 1915, Admiral Usedom received a message from Admiral Anton Haus, commander of the K.u.K. Kriegsmarine, stating that Austro-Hungarian intelligence had learned that the Allies were preparing for an

E**SULTANHISAR AND MUÂVENET-I MILLÎYE**

The Demirhisar class of torpedo boats and Muâvenet class of destroyers hold the distinction that a vessel of each class was responsible for the destruction of an Allied warship; *Sultanhisar* sank the Australian submarine HMAS *AE2* and *Muâvenet-i Milliye* the British pre-dreadnought HMS *Goliath*. Throughout most of the war the Demirhisar class vessels were employed as anti-submarine vessels and ersatz minesweepers while the Muâvenet class destroyers made several escort missions in the Black Sea but were typically confined to operations off the Bosphorus so that they could flee in case they encountered the superior Russian *Bespokoiny* class destroyers. Besides these limited operations, like *Yavuz* and *Midilli*, the Ottoman torpedo boats and destroyers were laid up at *Istinye* for most of the war as Ottoman coal supplies were so limited as to prevent operations even by smaller vessels. Besides the losses of *Demirhisar* and *Yarhisar*, *Hamidâbad* was ambushed and sunk by Russian destroyers on October 31, 1917, and *Gayret-i Vatâniye* was lost when she ran aground near Varna on August 27, 1916.





Two large-caliber shells exploding in Anzac Cove during a major Ottoman ground offensive aimed at eliminating the Allied beachhead on May 19, 1915; these shells are believed to have been fired from either *Barbaros Hayreddin* or *Torgut Reis*. (Australian War Memorial A01421)

imminent naval action against the Dardanelles. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill had been planning a large-scale naval assault on the Dardanelles in which a fleet of mostly pre-dreadnoughts would neutralize the Ottoman coastal fortifications through heavy bombardment. Minesweepers would then move in to clear the minefields at the Narrows and finally the battle fleet would proceed up the Sea of Marmara and place Constantinople under its guns. A large force of Allied warships began to assemble in the Bay of Mudros off the island of Tenedos, which was occupied by the British on February 25. Although Ottoman

coastal fortifications and ground troops played the greatest role in the defense of the Dardanelles during the ensuing Dardanelles/Gallipoli campaigns, several of the ships of the Ottoman fleet actively took part when they could. The sheer number of Allied warships off the Dardanelles ruled out a fleet action against the Allies by the Ottoman Navy, so Ottoman warships were limited to shore bombardment, convoy, and anti-submarine operations within the waters of the Dardanelles, with the exception of a handful of hit-and-run raids into the Aegean. The following are the primary actions undertaken by Ottoman warships in the Dardanelles Theater.

The Big Guns of *Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis*

On March 5 the British super-dreadnought *Queen Elizabeth* attempted to conduct a static indirect bombardment of the Narrows forts from north of the Straits. Shortly after *Queen Elizabeth* opened fire on the forts, two large caliber shells landed close to the battleship, startling her crew. Those shots came from *Barbaros Hayreddin*, which Korvettenkapitän Joachim von Arnim had steamed down from Constantinople and anchored in Poyraz Bay just north of the Narrows the day before. German officers of the Sonderkommando-Dardanellen had set up an observation post in the hills above the Narrows and relayed the coordinates of *Queen Elizabeth* via signal lamp to *Barbaros Hayreddin*. This odd duel, in which the opponents could not see each other, pitted the most powerful super-dreadnought in the world against a 21-year-old pre-dreadnought – and the older ship had the tactical advantage. On *Barbaros Hayreddin*'s third shot *Queen Elizabeth* was bracketed, and after 21 near misses the British battleship moved further out to sea, out of range of *Barbaros Hayreddin*'s guns but also out of range for any accurate firing with her own guns. After a similar duel on the following day, the British abandoned the attempt to silence the Narrows' forts through indirect fire over the Gallipoli Peninsula.

On April 25 the Gallipoli ground campaign began when Allied troops stormed ashore at Anzac Cove and Cape Helles. *Barbaros Hayreddin* and *Torgut Reis* were both on station north of the Narrows and fired on the invasion beaches as well as the Allied battleships covering the landings. Over the preceding weeks a number of new observation posts had been established and linked to the pre-dreadnoughts by telephone. This improved communications system allowed for more accurate indirect fire from the battleships. During the landings on April 25, *Torgut Reis* scored a hit on the pre-dreadnought *Triumph* as well as hits on some of the Allied transports.

Incredibly, neither of the Ottoman battleships was struck by enemy bombardment throughout the Gallipoli Campaign. Owing to limited amounts of coal and heavy-caliber ammunition, only one pre-dreadnought was kept on station in the Straits while the other returned to Constantinople for refitting. Although the pre-dreadnoughts were limited to firing only around 20 heavy-caliber shells per day due to ammunition shortages, this fire was a constant nuisance to Allied ships supporting the beachheads and their limited heavy artillery support did much to support the morale of Ottoman ground troops. By the end of May, the British had withdrawn their battleships farther out to sea, out of the range of *Barbaros Hayreddin's* and *Torgut Reis's* primary guns, and Admiral Souchon decided to return the ships to Constantinople. The big guns of the old battleships proved to be useful mobile batteries when given effective fire control, and provided fire support throughout the early stages of the Gallipoli Campaign.



British vessels helping to retrieve soldiers who had jumped overboard from SS *Manitou* (center) following the aborted attack on the transport made by the torpedo boat *Demirhisar* on April 16, 1915. (Australian War Memorial H16457)

The Cruise of *Demirhisar*

After the Allied bombardments of the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles, Admiral Souchon wanted to make an offensive show of force by sending a single torpedo boat out of the Straits to attack Allied shipping. The small 97-ton torpedo boat *Demirhisar*, armed with three torpedoes, was selected. *Demirhisar's* commanders, Leutnant Freiherr Wilhelm von Fircks and Captain Lüfti Talat Bey, planned to make an attack on the Allied fleet at anchor off Tenedos, and sailed into the Aegean on the evening of March 7, unseen by patrolling British destroyers. They never reached Tenedos, however; *Demirhisar* was spotted by a British patrol in the early evening of the 8th off Lesbos, and it took several hours to shake it off. After this chase, Fircks and Talat Bey decided to head for Smyrna as they were running low on coal and machine oil. As *Demirhisar* entered the Gulf of Smyrna on the morning of March 9, a British pre-dreadnought, light cruiser, and seaplane tender were sighted. Fircks and Talat Bey thought these targets were too good to pass up, and after waiting in a small cove until nightfall, *Demirhisar* approached unseen to close range and fired two torpedoes. Amazingly, both missed. There was no time to load the third torpedo as the pre-dreadnought had switched on its searchlights, so *Demirhisar* made its escape. After hiding out in a small port on the mainland during the daylight hours of the 10th, *Demirhisar* made a dash for Smyrna that evening. As *Demirhisar* steamed into the gulf it made an attack with its last torpedo on the British seaplane tender HMS *Anne*, anchored near the entrance (this time the torpedo exploded but the damage was not fatal), and then turned towards Smyrna, reaching the city's inner harbor at 0500hrs on March 11.

After a period of repairs and replenishment, *Demirhisar* steamed out of Smyrna on the evening of April 15 to again hunt for Allied shipping. Having steamed across the Aegean during the night, *Demirhisar* spotted a British steamer off the island of Skyros around 0900hrs on April 16. It was the transport SS *Manitou*, carrying British troops en route from Egypt to Tenedos. Fircks and Talat Bey signaled the *Manitou* to stop, and after approaching, Fircks ordering the British to abandon ship. As minutes passed, Fircks noticed no attempts were



The Bulgarian *Drazki* (ex-*Strogi*) was a Torpilleur Type 38 M class torpedo boat, the same as the Ottoman *Sultanhisar* which sank the Australian submarine *AE2*. *Drazki* is the only surviving torpedo boat in the world from World War I and is preserved at the Naval Museum Varna. (courtesy Naval Museum Varna)

these destroyers that were now hot on the heels of *Demirhisar* and they were closing the distance, as the torpedo boat could make only 18 knots. Off the southern coast of the island of Chios one of *Demirhisar*'s engines broke down. With a crippled boat and three enemy destroyers closing fast, Fircks and Talat Bey decided to scuttle *Demirhisar* and drove her hard aground on the beach on southeastern Chios. After throwing her guns into the sea and destroying her machinery, the crew of *Demirhisar* abandoned ship and withdrew inland. While the sortie of *Demirhisar* caused little tangible damage to the Allies, it did demonstrate an Ottoman will to fight and served as a morale boost to the Dardanelles defenders. A similar raid into the Aegean was undertaken by *Muâvenet-i Milliye* in early May, and would have much more impressive results (see Plate F for further details).

Nusret's Minefield

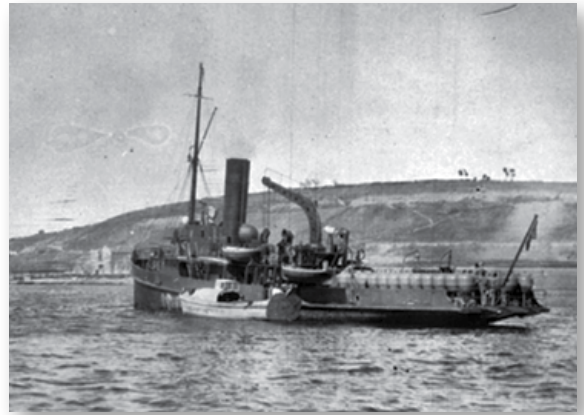
March 18, 1915, was the most successful day for the Ottoman Navy during the Dardanelles Campaign, and ironically its success was brought about by one of its smallest warships. After several abortive attempts to silence batteries and sweep mines inside the Straits from March 7–14, the British decided to conduct a massive naval bombardment of the Narrows forts from a fleet of ships within the Straits. At 1010hrs on March 18, a line of four British battleships, *Queen Elizabeth*, the battlecruiser *Inflexible*, and the semi-dreadnoughts *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson*, sailed into the Dardanelles, and at 1125hrs opened fire on the Narrows forts from a position about 6 miles up the Straits. Shortly after noon a second bombardment group, made up of the French pre-dreadnoughts *Galois*, *Charlemagne*, *Bouvet*, and *Suffren*, advanced past the first line of battleships, closing to within 4.5 miles of the Narrows forts, and opened fire. Around 1345hrs the Narrows forts were almost silent and the French pre-dreadnoughts were ordered to retire, to be replaced by a third line made up of the British pre-dreadnoughts *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, and *Ocean*. As the French ships made a broad turn to starboard to head south, *Bouvet*, which had turned into Eren Keui Bay along the Asian shore, was wracked by a massive explosion and capsized in less than three minutes.

What Allied commanders did not know was that the Ottomans had noticed that when Allied battleships inside the Straits had concluded their bombardments, they tended to make a broad turn to starboard in Eren Keui Bay while making

being made aboard *Manitou* to lower her lifeboats, and he repeated his order several times. At that point another British vessel was observed approaching, flying a naval ensign. Having no desire to be ambushed, Fircks and Talat Bey ordered two torpedoes fired at the transport, but there were no explosions. Fircks ordered the third torpedo to be loaded and fired it at *Manitou*; again, no explosion. All three torpedoes had either gone astray or misfired. Having shot their bolt and with the enemy rapidly closing, Fircks and Talat Bey ordered a hasty withdrawal towards the Anatolian coast.

As it turned out, *Manitou* had sent out distress messages and the destroyers HMS *Jed*, *Kennet*, and *Wear* were dispatched to intercept. It was

their way out of the Straits. On the night of March 8, the 365-ton minelayer *Nusret* (acquired in 1913 from Germaniawerft of Kiel) clandestinely laid a line of 26 mines parallel to the Asian shore across Eren Keui Bay. *Bouvet* was the first victim of *Nusret*'s minefield. At 1611hrs *Inflexible* struck a mine near the location where *Bouvet* went down. The battlecruiser took on nearly 1,600 tons of water and was saved only by beaching herself off Tenedos. Several minutes after *Inflexible* began limping away, *Irresistible* hit a mine. Her engine rooms flooded and the loss of power caused her to drift towards the Asian shore. With *Inflexible* and *Irresistible* damaged by mines and *Galois* and *Suffren* heavily damaged from shore fire, Rear Admiral Sir John de Robeck, commander of the Allied naval forces, ordered his ships to withdraw from the Straits at 1700hrs. *Ocean* was dispatched to take the listing *Irresistible* in tow, but at 1805hrs *Ocean* struck a mine. With her steering damaged, it was decided to abandon both *Irresistible* and *Ocean*, which had come under the fire of Ottoman mobile batteries, and their crews were taken off by British destroyers. *Irresistible* was sunk by Ottoman gunfire at 1930hrs and *Ocean* sank at 2230hrs after drifting for a few hours. Due in large part to the devastating losses from *Nusret*'s minefield, De Robeck made no further attempts to force the Straits by sea; at least on the surface.

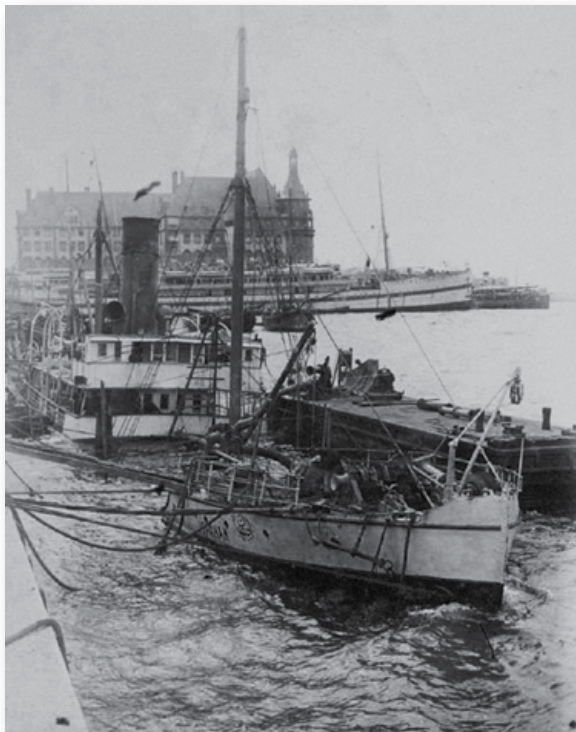


The minelayer *Nusret* photographed in the Straits with a full load of mines. The small minefield laid by this 365-ton vessel was responsible for the loss of Allied pre-dreadnoughts *Bouvet*, *Irresistible*, and *Ocean* on March 18, 1915.

Countering the Allied Submarine Threat

The underwater front in the Dardanelles began relatively early in the war. On December 13, 1914, the old battleship *Mesûdiye*, anchored as a floating battery just south of the Narrows, was torpedoed by the British submarine *B11*. As the Allied campaign against the Dardanelles shifted to a ground campaign on the Gallipoli Peninsula, German and Ottoman naval commanders became increasingly concerned about Allied submarines operating in the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles. These were primary transport and supply lines for Ottoman troops defending the peninsula as there were few roads and no rail lines. From the docks at Haydarpaşa railway station in Constantinople supply vessels ranging from ocean-going freighters, passenger liners, Bosphorus ferries, and barges towed by tugs delivered troops and supplies to the small ports on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The slow unloading in these underequipped ports created build-ups of ships sitting in the open roads off the ports, making tempting targets for Allied submarines. Prior to the Allied landing on April 25, only two Allied submarines had attempted to disrupt shipping in the Dardanelles. On January 15, 1915, the French submarine *Saphir* was attacked by Ottoman gunboats and surrendered after sustaining damage from hitting the bottom of the Straits. On April 17 the British *E15*, after entering the Dardanelles, was caught in a strong underwater current that drove it aground near Kephaz Point. Technical analysis gathered from the wreck of the *E15* showed that the British E class of submarines were much improved over the earlier B class and had a much longer underwater range. As a result, Souchon deployed the majority of his destroyers and torpedo boats on convoy missions and anti-submarine patrols beginning on April 27.

The Ottomans enjoyed another success against the Allied submarines on April 30. At 0800hrs the torpedo boat *Sultanhisar*, on its way back to



The Ottoman collier *İsfahan* sunk along the waterfront near the Haydarpaşa railway station in Constantinople, was torpedoed by the British submarine *E11* on August 13, 1915. Ottoman naval commanders feared the threat of Allied submarines breaching the Dardanelles defenses as the Gallipoli Front depended on seaborne supply from Constantinople.

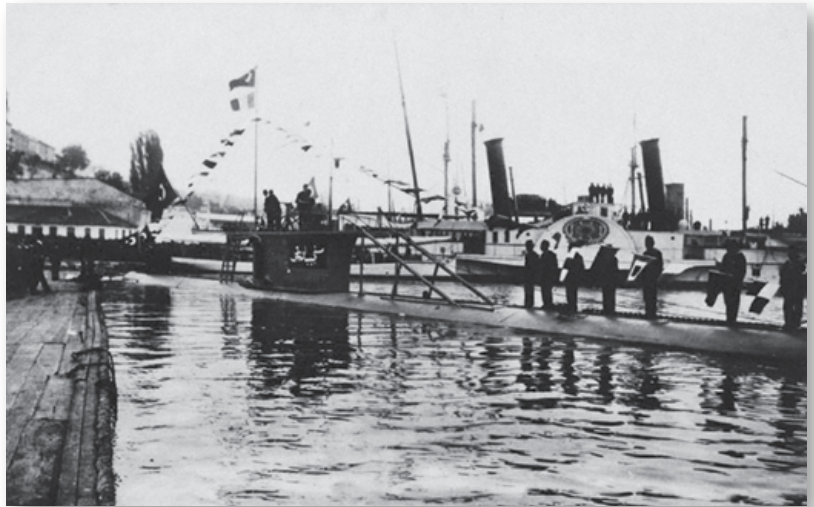
Constantinople at the end of a patrol, spotted the silhouette of a submarine in the morning mist. For the next two and a half hours Captain Ali Rıza of *Sultanhisar* engaged the submarine in a running battle, firing at the submarine's conning tower every time it partially surfaced to get its bearings. Finally, after a failed ramming attempt where the bow of *Sultanhisar* barely clipped the tip of the submarine's starboard hydroplane, the 800-ton Australian submarine *AE2* came to full surface and its crew abandoned ship. While the little 93-ton *Sultanhisar's* exploit was celebrated throughout the Ottoman Empire, HMAS *AE2* was the only Allied submarine sunk in the Dardanelles by a destroyer or torpedo boat. Despite these early successes against Allied submarines, the Allies continued their underwater campaign, and from May to December 1915 Ottoman shipping in the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara suffered. Souchon's convoy system broke down in the summer as the pressing need for supplies on the Gallipoli Front forced merchantmen to sail alone rather than on a limited convoy schedule, and dwindling coal supplies meant that destroyers and

torpedo boats were not always available for escort/patrol duty.

A loss that had significant ramifications to the reinforcement of the Gallipoli Front occurred on May 28 when the small steamer *Banderma* was torpedoed by the British *E11*, with 250 troops drowning. After this loss, all troop reinforcements were marched overland down the peninsula from the nearest railhead at Uzunköprü, 80 miles away, thus denying the Ottomans the ability to rapidly reinforce by sea. Warships of the Ottoman Navy became victims of the Allied submarine campaign as well. On August 6 the torpedo cruiser *Peyk-i Şevket* was torpedoed by *E11* and saved herself only by running aground; she was out of service for two years. Two days later, *E11* torpedoed *Barbaros Hayreddin* at 0500hrs on August 8; the pre-dreadnought capsized in seven minutes, taking 258 of her crew and a large supply of ammunition destined for the Gallipoli Front with her. The Samsun class destroyer *Yarhisar* was also torpedoed and sunk by *E11* on December 3, 1915, on the submarine's third and final sortie in the Dardanelles.

The increasingly successful submarine activity within the Dardanelles forced Souchon's officers to look to other means of protecting shipping inside the Straits. At the end of June, construction began on anti-submarine barriers consisting of anchored wire nets, floated by buoys, which were assembled by Ottoman sailors in the Constantinople naval arsenal. One barrier stretched across the narrowest part of the Straits at Nagara and a second was constructed across the entrance to the Bosphorus in early August. Small motorboats armed with 37mm guns and small rudimentary depth charges were tasked with patrolling the barriers. The Nagara barrier claimed a victim on September 4 when the British *E7* fouled itself in the net and was scuttled by its crew after losing its battery power and being driven to the surface by a depth charge. The unreliability of early submarines assisted the Ottomans on October 30 when the

French *Turquoise* lost control during a dive near the Narrows and then surfaced within range of a shore battery. *Turquoise* was captured intact and taken back to Constantinople, however the real prize was not the submarine but rather the codebooks and communiqués found inside that the French commander had neglected to destroy. From this information German intelligence officers learned that *Turquoise* was due to rendezvous with the



British *E20* in the Sea of Marmara on November 5. When *E20* arrived at its scheduled position on November 5 it rendezvoused with a submarine, but not *Turquoise*; the German *UB-14*, dispatched from Constantinople, was lying in ambush and torpedoed *E20* in a rather remarkable submarine-versus-submarine attack. Fortunately for the Ottomans, the Dardanelles underwater battle came to an abrupt end when the Allies abandoned the Gallipoli Campaign in early January 1916. Although the Ottomans lost over 56,000 tons in warship and merchant tonnage to submarines, the Allied underwater effort failed to cut the seaborne supply lines between Constantinople and the Gallipoli Peninsula. While Allied accounts claim a large number of Ottoman vessels lost, most of those were light sailing craft in which a number, if sunk in shallow water, could be raised and repaired. Only 3,000 tons of sailing craft were permanently lost, making the actual loss of Ottoman warship (six warships sunk by submarines accounted for almost half of the total lost tonnage) and merchant tonnage somewhere between 43,000 and 46,000 tons. The cargos of ships torpedoed in shallow waters could also frequently be recovered. Furthermore, of the 13 Allied submarines employed in the Dardanelles, eight were sunk or captured, a loss rate of 62 percent. Thus the overall efforts of the Ottoman Navy played a role in the Ottoman victory in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli Campaigns by denying control of the Straits to the Allies and providing vital logistical support to the troops defending the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The French submarine *Turquoise* was captured intact after being disabled by Ottoman shore fire on October 30, 1915. Shown here at Constantinople, she was repaired and renamed *Müstecib Onbaşı*. She never saw active service with the Ottoman Navy however as she was obsolete compared to the U-boats that eventually arrived from Germany. *Müstecib Onbaşı* spent the remainder of the war as a maintenance vessel, recharging the batteries of U-boats of U-Halbflottille Konstantinopel.

The Largest Air-Sea Battle of the War

After the failure of the Gallipoli Campaign, the Allied naval presence at the entrance to the Dardanelles significantly dwindled as the primary areas of operations moved to the Salonika and Palestine Fronts. Combat around the Dardanelles shifted to the skies. Aircraft of the Royal Naval Air Service, based on the outlying islands, conducted raids against the enemy's logistics networks and supply centers within the Aegean/Dardanelles theater. They were opposed by the floatplanes of the Wasserfliegerabteilung and the Ottoman Naval Air Service (Deniz Tayyare Bölükleri) and fighters of the Ottoman Army Air Force (Osmanlı Tayyare Bölükleri). *Yavuz* was the target of a unique British air raid on the evening of June 10, 1917, when a Handley Page O/100 twin-engine bomber, flown especially from England for the occasion, flew over the Ottoman Navy

Torpedo launchers taken from the destroyer *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, which sank the British pre-dreadnought HMS *Goliath* on the night of May 13, 1915, on display in the garden of the Turkish Navy's headquarters in Istanbul. Behind the launchers are an array of mines employed by the Ottoman Navy during the war.



yard at Istinye and made two bombing runs against *Yavuz*. The battlecruiser was not hit, but one of the 112lb bombs sank the destroyer *Yâdigâr-ı Millet* anchored nearby. *Yâdigâr-ı Millet* holds the ignominious distinction of being the largest warship sunk from the air in World War I.

Several months later, *Yavuz* was again the target of what became the largest air-sea battle of World War I. In December 1917, the Ottoman High Command requested any support the navy could offer in disrupting the flow of Allied supplies and troops from Salonika to Palestine. German aerial reconnaissance showed an increasing build-up of Allied merchant shipping off Salonika in mid-to-late December and this became a tempting target to the new commander of the Mittelmeerdivision, Vizeadmiral Hubert von Rebeur-Paschwitz (Admiral Souchon was transferred to the High Seas Fleet in October 1917), who was championing at the bit for offensive action. With Russia at the negotiating table and the coal crisis ended, Rebeur-Paschwitz decided to make a hit-and-run raid with *Yavuz* and *Midilli* on Allied shipping in the Aegean and sent the two ships to the northern Anatolian coal ports to fill their bunkers. He selected January 20, 1918, as the date for the raid. Aerial reconnaissance from the preceding days revealed that the only significant Allied warships in the area were a semi-dreadnought, three light cruisers, and two destroyers anchored at Mudros, and two monitors and two destroyers stationed off the Dardanelles near Imbros, none of which posed a serious threat to *Yavuz*. At 0515hrs on January 20, *Yavuz* and *Midilli*

F

SINKING GOLIATH

On May 9, 1915, Admiral von Usedom requested a naval attack against British battleships moored in Morto Bay, which were providing gunfire support for the front at Cape Helles. At 1840hrs on May 12, *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, with Kapitänleutnant Rudolph Firle and Captain Ahmet Saffet in joint command, sailed from Çanakkale and made its way through the mine fields, anchoring just outside the barriers to wait for darkness. Firle decided to wait and move in after midnight, believing that the British crews on the battleships and the destroyers guarding them would be tired and less alert. At 0030hrs on May 13, *Muâvenet-i Milliye* resumed its course and crept unnoticed along the European coast. Firle approached two battleships at anchor in Morto Bay around 0100hrs and at 0113hrs a signal was flashed from the closest battleship, requesting identification; Firle ordered his signalman to respond in kind, requesting the identification of the signaling ship. The battleship requested identification again and *Muâvenet-i Milliye* responded with the same request. Confused, the battleship again signaled for identification and issued a verbal challenge, but it was too late; at that moment Firle gave the order to fire and three Schwarzkopf A/08 torpedoes were launched from the bow, amidships, and aft tubes from a distance of 300m. All three torpedoes hit and the battleship began to capsize in seconds. Firle immediately ordered full speed and set a course back towards the mine barriers. By 0500hrs *Muâvenet-i Milliye* anchored off Çanakkale, not having been spotted by any Allied destroyers in the Straits on its return trip. *Muâvenet-i Milliye* and her crew later received a hero's welcome in Constantinople; their prize was HMS *Goliath*, a 13,160 ton pre-dreadnought commissioned in 1900.





One of the old Akhisar/Antalya class torpedo boats patrolling in the Straits off the small harbor of Kilias Liman. Small ports and inlets like this where Ottoman supplies were delivered for the Gallipoli Front were prime targets for Allied submarines. (courtesy Gunter Hartnagel Collection)

Vice Admiral Hubert von Rebeur-Paschwitz (right), last wartime commander of the Ottoman fleet, photographed on a visit to the United States in 1912 with German ambassador Count Johann von Bernstorff. (Library of Congress LC-DIG-ggbain-13323)



passed through the last defensive minefield and made their way into the Aegean, with the destroyers *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, *Nümüne-i Hamiyet*, *Samsun*, and *Basra* stationed in the Straits in case they were needed. Thanks to thick morning mists, the British did not immediately detect the raid, but at 0610hrs *Yavuz* struck a mine on her port side. Damage was minimal as a coal bunker had absorbed much of the blast, and Rebeur-Paschwitz decided to carry on. *Yavuz* and *Midilli* approached Imbros around 0700hrs and, after destroying a lookout station and jamming the wireless signals of patrolling destroyers, turned towards Kusu Bay on

the northeast corner of the island where the monitors *Raglan* and *M28* were anchored. At 0730hrs the Germans sighted the monitors and commenced firing; both exploded and sank after suffering hits to their magazines, and Rebeur-Paschwitz turned his ships around at 0802hrs, deciding to head for the British warships at Mudros.

Only three hours into the raid it appeared as if the Germans were on the verge of sweeping the British from the Aegean, but the winds of fate rapidly shifted. At around 0840hrs lookouts on *Midilli* spotted British aircraft approaching from the east. Rebeur-Paschwitz ordered *Midilli* to pull ahead of *Yavuz* so that the battlecruiser's antiaircraft guns could have a better shot at the incoming aircraft, but as the cruiser turned she inadvertently entered a minefield and soon struck a mine. *Yavuz* moved in to take the crippled cruiser in tow, but struck a mine herself. As *Yavuz* backed away *Midilli* attempted to work her way out of the minefield, but with her steering gear damaged she stumbled into four more mines in a matter of five minutes. At 0911hrs she went down by the stern. With *Midilli* sunk, his flagship damaged, and British aircraft dropping bombs all around, Rebeur-Paschwitz decided to make for the Dardanelles. After having the misfortune of striking a third mine at 0948hrs and taking on a 10–15° list, *Yavuz*

limped into the Dardanelles at 1030hrs. However, at 1132hrs, only 8 miles up the Straits, *Yavuz* plowed into a sandbar at 15 knots and slammed to a halt, her pilot having made a navigational error. She was hard aground and, with their reconnaissance aircraft circling overhead, the British knew of her predicament. Over the next five days RNAS aircraft based on Mudros launched raids on the stricken battlecruiser whenever weather permitted (for more details see Plate G). *Yavuz* was not completely helpless, however; in addition to the ship's four 88mm antiaircraft guns, the Ottoman Army sent additional antiaircraft batteries and machine guns to aid in the aerial defense. British pilots reported that the antiaircraft fire forced them to attack from higher altitudes, hardly ideal for accurate bombing. Fighters of the *Wasserfliegerabteilung* and the Ottoman Army Air Force provided top cover as well. After a five-day effort by the Ottoman Navy, *Yavuz* was finally refloated on the evening of January 26 and sailed into Constantinople the following day. With flags flying it appeared as if she had returned triumphantly to



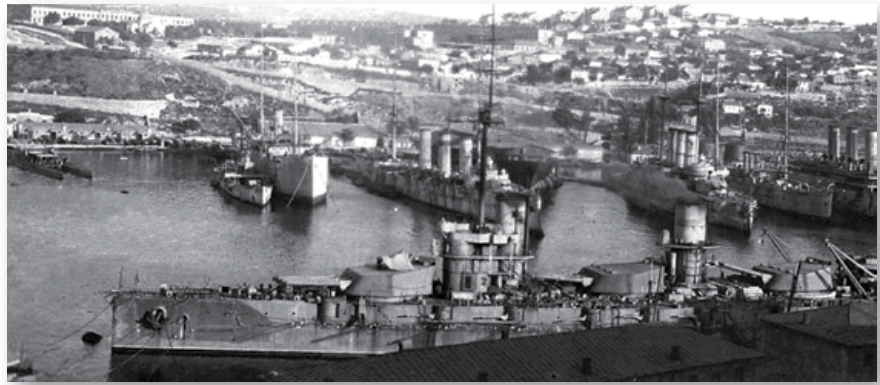
Midilli (left), photographed from *Yavuz* (foreground), with the destroyers *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, *Nümûne-i Hamiyet*, *Basra*, and *Samsun*, in the Sea of Marmara in January 1918. This photograph was taken just prior to *Yavuz* and *Midilli*'s raid into the Aegean. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R36174, photo: o.Ang)

Constantinople, but in truth Rebeur-Paschwitz had suffered a crippling defeat, having lost *Midilli* and almost losing *Yavuz* for a return of only two British monitors sunk. With the exception of floatplane operations, there was no further Ottoman naval activity in the Aegean or Dardanelles for the remainder of the war.

THE END OF THE WAR, 1918

The last actions of the Ottoman Navy in World War I took place throughout the Black Sea amid the troubles of the collapsing Russian Empire. A stipulation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was that the entire Russian Black Sea Fleet was to be berthed in Sevastopol while its fate was determined by German and Bolshevik diplomats. German ground troops occupied Sevastopol on May 1, 1918, and Admiral Rebeur-Paschwitz dispatched *Yavuz* and the recently reactivated *Hamidiye* to Sevastopol to assess the naval situation in the port. In the navy yard the Germans found the following: seven pre-dreadnoughts, three cruisers (one being the *Mecidiye*, renamed *Prut* by the Russians), three Besspokoyny class destroyers, and seven older destroyers as well as several submarines and other light vessels. The dreadnoughts *Volia* (previously the *Imperator Aleksandr III*), *Svobodnaya Rossiya* (previously the *Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya*), and a large group of destroyers had sailed to Novorossiysk just prior to the arrival of the Germans in Sevastopol in an attempt to keep the ships out of German hands. The German authorities demanded the return of these ships to Sevastopol, and on June 19 *Volia*, three Besspokoyny class destroyers, two torpedo boats, and seaplane carrier *Imperator Traian* sailed into port; the crews of the remaining Russian ships refused to sail and threatened to scuttle their ships if forced to do so. When the German High Command learned of this it demanded that Rebeur-Paschwitz sail to Novorossiysk and capture the remaining ships. On June 26 *Yavuz*, *Muâvenet-i Milliye*, and *Nümûne-i Hamiyet* departed for Novorossiysk on what would be the last major mission of the Ottoman Navy. When Rebeur-Paschwitz arrived on the 28th, all he could see were the topmasts of the destroyers protruding from the water; upon secret orders from Moscow, the remaining Russian warships, including *Svobodnaya Rossiya*, had been scuttled. After this *Yavuz* returned to Sevastopol, and from July 13–15 escorted *Hamidiye*, towing *Mecidiye*, to Constantinople. The battlecruiser remained at anchor at Istinye for the remainder of the war. Back in Sevastopol a naval technical commission from Germany concluded that at best, given the lack of adequate labor and trained crews, the Mittelmeerddivision would only be able to put *Volia* and three or four

The Russian super-dreadnought *Volia* (ex-*Imperator Aleksandr III*) photographed in front of a cruiser and pre-dreadnought of the Black Sea Fleet following the German capture of the naval base at Sevastopol in May 1918. *Volia* served briefly as SMS *Volya* of the Mittelmeerdivision prior to the November 11, 1918 armistice.



of the Bespokoiny class destroyers into service by the end of the year. That was an optimistic projection; the Germans only succeeded in putting together a crew for *Volia*, and she conducted her first sea trials under the German ensign for only a few days in early November, just before the war ended.

In the midst of the Ottoman collapse along the front in Syria, the new Ottoman Minister of Marine, Rauf Orbay, signed the Armistice of Mudros with the Allies, taking what was left of the Ottoman Empire out of the war on October 30, 1918. The following day Rauf Orbay relieved Rebeur-Paschwitz of command of the Ottoman Fleet and ordered all German officers and sailors to leave Ottoman territory. The Mittelmeerdivision began to transfer its sailors and technical personnel from Constantinople to the German-controlled Ukrainian ports on October 31. The last major event for the Ottoman Navy during the war took place on November 2 when, in a major ceremony with flags flying and bands playing, Rebeur-Paschwitz formally handed over *Yavuz* to the Ottoman Navy. The warship that had precipitated the Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I had finally become an Ottoman ship. As the Ottoman Empire crumbled in the wake of the Turkish War of Independence, many of the warships of the Sultan's fleet went on to become the foundation of the Navy of the Republic of Turkey. When the Republic of Turkey was declared by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on October 29, 1923, *Hamidiye*, the largest ex-Ottoman ship still operable, became the flagship of the new Turkish Navy. She would eventually be joined by

G

DEFENSE OF YAVUZ

Beginning on the morning of January 20, 1918, the five-plane 6nci Tayyare Bölüğü fighter squadron of the Ottoman Air Force based at Chanak and a handful of floatplanes of the Wasserfliegerabteilung were responsible for the defense of *Yavuz*, grounded in the Dardanelles off Nagara Point, from almost continuous British air raids. From January 20 to 25, in the largest and longest sustained aerial attack on a warship in World War I, the British and their Greek allies flew over 250 sorties with over 60 aircraft and dropped over 15 tons of bombs over their target. *Yavuz* was hit only twice, suffering minor damage; the 65lb and 112lb British bombs were simply not powerful enough to significantly harm the battlecruiser. *Yavuz's* sailors ashore ironically benefitted from the aerial attacks; every night they were able to enjoy fresh fish collected from the surface of the waters around *Yavuz*, the only casualties of the Allied aerial bombardments. Ottoman vessels made numerous unsuccessful attempts to pull the beached battlecruiser off the sandbar on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th. Finally, on the evening of the 25th, *Torgut Reis*, with her stern turned towards *Yavuz's* bow, used the force of her propellers to shift the sand out from under *Yavuz's* keel. The battleship's propellers went to work against the sand throughout the evening and the morning and afternoon of the following day. Finally, at 1747hrs on January 26, with *Torgut Reis* and two tugs towing, *Yavuz* was pulled off the sandbar. Shortly thereafter she proceeded up the Dardanelles, limping into Constantinople the following day, and defiantly dropped anchor in front of the Dolmabahçe Palace for all to see.



Yavuz photographed from the aircraft carrier USS *Leyte* during a US naval visit to Istanbul in May 1947. Having served the Kaiserliche Marine, the Ottoman Navy, and the Turkish Navy, *Yavuz* joined the greater fleet of NATO, receiving hull number *B70* in 1952. She was the world's longest-serving dreadnought warship.



the well-worn *Mecidiye*, the three surviving Samsun class destroyers, and the gunboats *Berk-i Satvet* and *Peyk-i Şevket*, all of which were repaired and overhauled in the mid-1920s. The Samsun class destroyers were decommissioned in 1932 after the purchase of new destroyers from Italy. *Hamidiye*, *Mecidiye*, *Berk-i Satvet*, and *Peyk-i Şevket* were assigned to reserve status in 1931; the torpedo cruisers were decommissioned at the end of World War II, and the old cruisers were finally retired in 1947. Even the old pre-dreadnought *Torgut Reis*, with only one primary 11in gun turret still aboard, was overhauled and used as a school ship until 1933.

It seems fitting, however, that the most famous Ottoman warship served and survived the longest. After the Armistice of Mudros, *Yavuz* remained anchored in a dilapidated condition in the Gulf of Izmit for seven years. Her boilers were worn out, her steering gear was not functional, the mine damage from her early 1918 cruise into the Aegean had not been repaired, and she still had the troublesome steam pipes that had plagued her already in 1914. Finally in 1926, the Turkish Navy purchased a 26,000-ton floating dock that was transported from Germany, and the battlecruiser received the proper repairs and overhaul she had so long needed. After three years of work *Yavuz* went to sea again, this time as the flagship of the Turkish Navy. She served for another three decades, being formally decommissioned in 1960. She was offered as a museum ship to West Germany but the German government turned the offer down and she was scrapped in the early 1970s.

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